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Plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021

Summary

The plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 is aimed at contributing to the deepening of organizational accountability and learning in support of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution 71/243 (QCPR)).

The plan builds upon the analysis of lessons learned from the plan for global thematic evaluations, 2014–2017; recommendations from recent assessments of the evaluation function in UNICEF; the evaluation requirements of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021; the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; the 2016 QCPR; costed evaluation plans approved by the Executive Board of UNICEF as part of country programmes of cooperation; and extensive consultation with the organization and with key United Nations partners.

The plan presents an approach to evaluating various aspects of the work of UNICEF. Overarching issues will be addressed through the evaluation of the Strategic Plan, the UNICEF Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021, country programmes, Level 3 emergencies and the UNICEF review of development effectiveness, among others. In addition, there is a strong focus on the evaluation of sectoral issues as well as cross-sectoral ones, such as education in emergencies and child protection systems. Furthermore, the plan covers joint evaluations with sister United Nations agencies and other partners.

By focusing on some of the key constraints to improving the well-being of the most disadvantaged children everywhere, the plan reflects the principles of the 2030 Agenda, in particular the pledge to leave no one and no child behind and to reach the farthest behind first. A notable shift, compared with previous plans, is the increased emphasis on evaluating the work of UNICEF and partners in humanitarian situations.

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A second shift is the increased attention to evaluability assessment, which will provide evidence for timely programme adjustments.

The plan builds upon the recommendations of the United Nations Evaluation Group peer review of the evaluation function of UNICEF, as well as guiding principles derived from the 2030 Agenda and the 2016 QCPR.

The Executive Board is requested to adopt the draft decision relating to evaluation contained in section XIII.

I. Introduction

1. The plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 presents the priorities for corporate evaluations to be conducted by the Evaluation Office. While the plan takes into consideration the breadth of the organization's work, it does not cover the significant evaluation efforts undertaken at the regional and country levels. Country-level evaluations are described in the costed evaluation plans that are annexed to every country programme document that is approved by the Executive Board. Regional offices carry out multi-country evaluations and support the country offices to execute the costed evaluation plans.

2. In addition to the priorities for corporate evaluations, the plan describes the types of support that the Evaluation Office provides, including the ways in which the Office strengthens quality assurance for and technical support to all levels of the organization. The Office adds value in carrying out such activities in a manner that is impartial, timely and responsive to diverse humanitarian and development challenges.

3. To ensure adequate learning and accountability, the plan for global evaluations is organized according to the Goal Areas, change strategies and enablers of the Strategic Plan. By focusing on some of the key constraints to improving the well-being of the most disadvantaged children everywhere, the plan reflects the principles of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular, the pledge to leave no one and no child behind and to reach the farthest behind first.

4. Although set within a four-year time frame, the plan will be adjusted as necessary to cover issues that emerge in the course of the implementation of the Strategic Plan, including those related to new emergencies. The Executive Board will be duly informed of emerging issues as they arise. The plan will also be adjusted, if necessary, on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations working together.

II. The changing context

5. The UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 identifies significant gaps in the achievement of the global accords[1] for many of the world's 2.3 billion children. The nature of these gaps requires a deeper understanding of what is and is not working for children and how UNICEF and partners can effectively accelerate progress.

6. The 2030 Agenda provides for intersectoral, multi-stakeholder and country-led approaches to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Many countries have ascended to middle- or high-income status, with changing needs and expectations. Meanwhile, there has been a sharp rise in the number, intensity and duration of conflicts and humanitarian crises, in some cases sparking mass migrations.

7. In accordance with the 2016 quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (General Assembly resolution 71/243 (QCPR)) and the subsequent reform agenda of the Secretary-General,[2] which is under consideration by Member States, the entities of the United Nations

[1] Global accords on sustainable development (2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development), financing for development (Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development), climate change (Paris Agreement), and urbanization (United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III)), the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 and related actions, including recommendations from the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit.

[2] Report of the Secretary-General on repositioning the United Nations development system to deliver on the 2030 Agenda: ensuring a better future for all (A/72/124–E/2018/3), which notes that the comprehensive and integrated nature of the Sustainable Development Goals demands more independent and coordinated assessments and evaluations by the United Nations development system.

development system are expected to work together more coherently to strengthen evaluations and the evaluation capacity of countries. Expectations related to transparency, value for money and results are high among Member States.

8. All of this presents opportunities for UNICEF to make strategic choices, demonstrate effective and efficient programme and operational performance and show measurable impact that can be plausibly attributed to its efforts. The evaluation function has a key role to play in making use of these opportunities. It provides impartial validation of strategic choices and programme performance and results as well as meaningful feedback on operational effectiveness and efficiency. With this in mind, the proposed evaluations have been derived from a careful analysis of the areas in which evaluation evidence is required in support of achieving the targets of the Strategic Plan and the 2030 Agenda.

9. The plan is also in support of General Assembly resolution 70/299 on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level, particularly in providing evaluation evidence on the child-focused Sustainable Development Goals that will be reviewed by the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

10. Overall, the plan is aimed at ensuring a good mix of evaluation products focusing on areas in which corporate investment is high, that are of strategic importance or in which UNICEF engagement is relatively new, thus requiring more learning.

III. Lessons learned

11. The plan for global thematic evaluations, 2014–2017 was presented to the UNICEF Executive Board in 2014, covering the period of the Strategic Plan, 2014–2017, and was subsequently updated in 2016.

12. Several independent reviews in recent years have provided useful insights and lessons learned about the performance of the evaluation function in UNICEF. These have also shaped the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021. Specifically, the plan will be especially focused on addressing lessons learned and recommendations from:

(a) The 2017 United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG) peer review of the evaluation function of UNICEF and its management response, which included recommendations on ensuring a balance in the coverage of evaluations; improving quality; preparing a plan for global evaluations that builds upon country-level costed evaluation plans; and working with United Nations partners to accelerate national evaluation capacity development;

(b) The 2015–2016 Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network's institutional assessment of UNICEF, which found that the overall quality of UNICEF evaluations, which are supported by robust quality-assurance systems, was improving. The assessment observed, however, that the extraction and use of lessons from evaluations was neither systematic nor comprehensive. It also raised concerns about the coverage of evaluations;

(c) The UNICEF review of development effectiveness, 2012–2015, which identified the need for greater emphasis on the use of evaluations as well as wider coverage of relevant programmes.

13. Furthermore, the increasing attention by UNICEF to humanitarian crises should be backed by timely evaluations for improved learning and accountability. The response of UNICEF to crises grew from 294 humanitarian situations in 98 UNICEF country offices in 2014 to 344 humanitarian situations in 108 country offices in 2016. Particular focus on evaluating the work of UNICEF in humanitarian situations is therefore imperative in order to improve the delivery of programmes.

14. These lessons also require innovative evaluation tools and approaches tailored to a range of different contexts. The better use of learning from evaluation evidence requires evaluation processes and products that are timely and responsive to organizational demands and needs. More emphasis on developing capacity to plan and manage useful, effective, high-quality evaluations throughout the organization will support increased learning, improved performance and better results.

15. The plan is aimed at addressing these lessons by ensuring a balance in the selection of evaluation topics across all areas of the Strategic Plan as well as relevance to the programming challenges, especially at the country level.

IV. Guiding principles

16. The UNEG norms of utility, credibility and independence form the key pillars of the plan, which has been prepared on the basis of the objective analysis of country programme costed evaluation plans, the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021, and consultations within the organization and with United Nations partners. Human rights principles and standards and gender equality considerations will be integral parts of each of the proposed evaluations.

17. In addition, the proposed evaluations will be informed by considerations of strategies to scale up proven interventions; integrated approaches to delivery; and the participation of stakeholders, including children.

18. The evaluation of humanitarian assistance is mainstreamed in each component of the plan. The plan also provides for the evaluation of the UNICEF response to Level 3 humanitarian situations. It further commits to building evaluation evidence on bridging the humanitarian-development divide.

19. Overall, the plan is aimed at ensuring that the Evaluation Office works on a mix of evaluation products focusing on the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of programmes.

20. The plan is aligned with the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 in order to provide to managers the evidence needed to improve learning and accountability. As discussed in the next section, the plan includes priorities under each of the five Goal Areas of the Strategic Plan as well as the change strategies and enablers (organizational performance factors). Furthermore, the plan covers the cross-cutting priorities of the Strategic Plan, namely, humanitarian action and gender equality.

21. The plan is informed by the 2013 evaluation policy of UNICEF and the 2017 UNEG peer review of the evaluation function of UNICEF. The plan takes note of Executive Board decision 2017/17 welcoming the commitment of UNICEF to develop a revised evaluation policy, which will be presented at the annual session of the Executive Board in June 2018.

22. The plan responds to the demands of the 2030 Agenda for rigorous evidence, informed by country-led evaluations, that is high-quality, accessible, timely and reliable, and to the 2016 QCPR provision for national evaluation capacity development in partnership with other United Nations entities.

V. Objectives

23. The plan for global evaluations is aimed at fostering organization-wide learning about what works and does not work for achieving results for children. It will strengthen evidence-based decision-making by national policymakers and programme managers by providing timely and dependable feedback on what is working well and any shortcomings. The plan is also aimed at enhancing corporate accountability for results for children. Corporate

evaluations will strengthen the oversight of the organization and further enhance transparent and accountable governance.

24. To this end, a menu of evaluation products is proposed below, including: (a) global thematic evaluations; (b) evaluation syntheses and reviews; and (c) evaluability assessments of relatively new programmes, as well as (d) initiatives whose design does not readily lend itself to evaluation. In addition, the plan contains a description of the ways in which the organization's capacity for managing evaluations will be strengthened.

VI. Criteria for the prioritization of evaluation topics

25. On the basis of recent experience, the plan contains two sets of criteria to prioritize evaluation topics and products, namely: context and feasibility.

26. The contextual criteria are:

(a) Use: the timing and design of evaluations are explicitly linked to and intended to influence initiatives of UNICEF and partners as well as joint programmes with United Nations entities; the proposed evaluations respond to the need to deliver evidence and analysis that add to the existing body of knowledge, while avoiding duplication;

(b) Organizational investment: substantial investments have been or are being made by the organization in the area of work;

(c) Relevance: the evaluation directly and substantively links to the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and to the organization's commitment to the 2030 Agenda; tackles programmes with the potential for scale-up and with greater opportunities for corporate learning; is relevant to different programme development environments; and represents well the diverse operational context within which UNICEF works;

(d) Demand: the evaluation addresses key issues identified by various levels of the organization and partners, as documented by the analysis of the evaluation topics included in the costed evaluation plans of country programmes of cooperation;

(e) Geographical and sectoral coverage: the evaluation reflects the diversity of UNICEF programmes in terms of geography and sectoral or thematic focus;

(f) Risks and evaluation history: the evaluation covers new or emerging areas of engagement and tackles unaddressed strategic programme areas of country programmes of cooperation, especially those without an evaluation at the corporate level in the past three to five years. It also addresses areas in which UNICEF may be facing high levels of risk, including operations in unstable environments.

27. The feasibility criteria include:

(a) Causality, attribution and contribution: the evaluation represents an opportunity to focus on the unique contributions of UNICEF to the delivery of results for children;

(b) Impact: the topic offers a viable opportunity to trace the programme logic through to effectiveness and impact measurement;

(c) Evaluability: the area of work can be evaluated both in principle (i.e., there is a clear programme logic or theory of change) and in practice (i.e., measures, including proxies, have been developed and data collected in association with programme logic).

28. On the basis of the above-mentioned criteria and the analysis of country costed evaluations; lessons learned from the previous evaluation plans; the guiding principles; and structured consultations with key stakeholders, including the Global Evaluation Committee and other United Nations agencies, the Evaluation Office proposes a set of topics and accompanying evaluations as the core of the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021.

VII. Evaluation products

29. The plan for global evaluations includes a range of evaluation products to be delivered by the Evaluation Office:

(a) *Thematic evaluations of strategic topics or themes* focus on the key elements of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 in relation to the relevance and coherence of programmes and the effectiveness and efficiency of their implementation. The outcomes, impact and sustainability of the work of UNICEF will also be assessed through thematic evaluations. Thematic evaluations will comprise both summative and formative evaluations, depending upon the stage of programme implementation. They may also involve case studies that cover an entire country programme or thematic issue across several country programmes in order to enhance the usefulness of evaluations, especially for national partners, and to foster cross-country learning;

> *Summative* evaluations are usually conducted towards the end or upon the mature and robust implementation of an intervention to determine to what extent expected results have been achieved (and whether there are significant unintended consequences) for the purposes of accountability and to inform the future design and delivery of similar interventions.
>
> *Formative* evaluations are conducted during implementation with a view to helping to improve performance. Many summative evaluations have a formative aspect insofar as they inform future phases of an intervention or guide new interventions of a similar kind; equally, formative evaluations may have summative elements assessing early phases of implementation.

(b) *Evaluation syntheses and reviews* examine evaluation evidence on a particular topic or theme in terms of coverage and quality, draw together key findings and lessons, and present general conclusions and recommendations. Country-level and multi-country evaluations are important sources of evidence for evaluation syntheses;

(c) *Evaluability assessments* will focus on readiness for evaluation both in principle (i.e., the robustness of the theory of change or programme logic) and in practice (i.e., the robustness of performance measures and data availability and quality) and on the conduciveness of the context. Evaluability assessments will be expanded to include value-for-money considerations in programme design and roll-out. By focusing on the robustness of the design, evaluability assessments will contribute to the likelihood of achieving programme targets.

30. The plan for global evaluations comprises the following products: in addition to evaluations of Level 3 emergencies, there are 22 evaluations (including 11 rolled over from the previous plan); seven evaluability assessments (including one rolled over from the previous plan); and three evaluation reviews and syntheses. The total number of evaluation products represents an increase of 11 products from the previous plan period. Ongoing evaluations that have been rolled over from the previous plan are marked with a footnote.

31. The proposed evaluations will provide evidence on achievements related to the five Goal Areas as well as to the change strategies and enablers of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021. The distribution of topics is listed in table 1.

Table 1
Distribution of evaluation topics

UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 component	*Number of evaluation products*
Goal Area 1: Every child survives and thrives	6
Goal Area 2: Every child learns	6
Goal Area 3: Every child is protected from violence and abuse	5
Goal Area 4: Every child lives in a clean and safe environment	4
Goal Area 5: Every child has an equitable chance in life	3 (Equity will be mainstreamed in all evaluations.)
Humanitarian action as a cross-cutting priority	3 (Evaluation of UNICEF work in humanitarian situations will also be mainstreamed in all Goal Areas, in addition to the evaluation of Level 3 emergencies.)
Gender equality as a cross-cutting priority	Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan, 2018–2021 (Gender equality will also be mainstreamed in all Goal Areas.)
Change strategies and enablers	4 (Change strategies and enablers will also be mainstreamed in all other evaluations.)
Joint evaluation products with other United Nations agencies	5 (The joint evaluation products will also be included in the Strategic Plan components listed above.)

32. Table 2 presents the priority evaluation topics and the ways in which they will be sequenced in the four years covered by the plan. While most of the evaluation products will be commissioned and managed by the Evaluation Office, joint evaluations undertaken in collaboration with other agencies will typically require shared costs and joint management. Ongoing evaluations that have been rolled over from the previous plan are marked with a footnote.

33. The evaluation of humanitarian action is included for each Goal Area. In addition, the plan makes a provision for evaluating Level 3 emergencies at the corporate level, while working with regional offices to evaluate Level 2 emergencies.

34. Joint evaluations with other United Nations entities will yield at least five evaluation products. In addition, UNICEF is working with sister United Nations agencies to increase collaboration in the design and execution of evaluations, to support efforts by the Secretary-General towards system-wide strengthening and coordination of evaluations and to jointly support national evaluation capacity development. UNICEF will also actively support the evaluation of the UNEG Strategy 2014–2019.

Table 2
Evaluation topics and products proposed for the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021

Evaluation topic	*Year of completion/submission*			
Every child survives and thrives				
Evaluation of the H4+ Joint Programme (the joint initiative[a] of six United Nations agencies[b] for technical support of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health)[c]	2018			
Evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under 5 years of age[c]	2018			
Evaluation of the UNICEF programme on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and paediatric AIDS[c]	2018			
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to health systems strengthening[c]		2019		
Evaluability assessment of scaling up early stimulation and care			2020	
Evaluation of UNICEF work in public health emergencies				2021
Every child learns				
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to girls' education[c]	2018			
Evaluation of the Out-of-School Children Initiative[c]	2018			
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to education in humanitarian situations			2020	
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to improved teaching and learning			2020	
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to early learning				2021
Evaluability assessment of scaling up inclusive education for children with disabilities				2021
Every child is protected from violence and exploitation				
Joint evaluability assessment (2018[c]) and independent midterm review (2019) of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage	2018	2019		
Strengthening child protection systems: evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programme performance[c]		2019		
Evaluability assessment of child protection in conflict situations		2019		
Evaluation of the UNICEF-UNFPA joint programme on female genital mutilation/cutting			2020	
Evaluation of UNICEF work in strengthening civil registration and vital statistics systems				2021
Every child lives in a safe and clean environment				
Evaluation of UNICEF drinking water supply programming in rural areas and small towns (2006–2016)[c]	2018			
Evaluability assessment of UNICEF work on children in cities		2019		
Evaluation of the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene in humanitarian situations			2020	
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to strengthening the enabling environment for water, sanitation and hygiene				2021
Every child has an equitable chance in life				
Evaluability assessment of adolescent participation and empowerment		2019		
Evaluation of approaches to social protection programming in humanitarian situations, including cash-based programming			2020	
Children on the move: synthesis of evaluations on the UNICEF contribution				2021
Humanitarian				
Towards improved emergency response: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016[c]	2018			

Evaluation topic	*Year of completion submission*
Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex and high-threat environments[c]	2019
Evaluability assessment of the UNICEF contribution to enhancing humanitarian-development integration	2020
Evaluations of Level 3 emergencies	2018 2019 2020 2021
Change strategies and enablers	
Evaluation of innovation in the work of UNICEF	2018
Evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan	2019
Development effectiveness review of UNICEF	2020
Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (Goal Areas, change strategies and enablers)	2020

[a] The initiative is known as the H4+ Joint Programme Canada and Sweden (2011–2016).
[b] The six agencies are the World Health Organization, UNICEF, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Bank, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women).
[c] Rolled over from the plan for global thematic evaluations, 2014–2017.

VIII. Other key priorities

Evaluating country programme results

35. The methodology for evaluating country programmes will be reviewed in 2018 and a revised approach tested in the period 2018–2019 for scale-up in subsequent years. This initiative is aimed at improving the focus on results achievement at the country level. The equity focus (leaving no child behind) will be a strong feature in the design and implementation of these evaluations. The revised methodology will improve the timeliness and coverage of the evaluations without undermining quality. It will also strengthen the links with the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) evaluations as UNICEF continues to play key roles in the evaluation of UNDAFs in various country contexts. For the purposes of improving coverage and upholding the norm on independence, these evaluations will be managed by the regional offices with support from the Evaluation Office.

Methodological studies

36. Methodological studies by the Evaluation Office provide guidance on addressing evaluation challenges encountered by UNICEF and partners, drawing on international best practices. The Office will continue to invest in methods and tools that deliver credible and timely evaluations.

Joint activities with United Nations development system entities

37. The UNICEF Evaluation Office will continue to promote joint evaluation work, covering both the development and humanitarian fields. Joint and inter-agency evaluations and capacity development will continue to be prioritized. UNICEF will continue to be a core member of the Inter-agency Humanitarian Evaluation group.

38. The UNICEF Evaluation Office has been a core member of UNEG since the group's creation and will continue to deepen its partnership with it. UNICEF staff have been active in revising the ethics code for evaluation in the United Nations system, as well as in the evaluation of the UNEG Strategy 2014–2019, among others. The Office is also currently a Co-Chair of EvalPartners, a global network that brings together United Nations agencies;

national, regional and global civil society organizations (CSOs); CSO networks; and a number of bilateral development agencies.[3]

Supporting national evaluation capacity development

39. General Assembly resolution 69/237 on building capacity for the evaluation of development activities at the country level, adopted in 2014, provides the framework to support countries to establish national evaluation systems for reporting progress towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In its resolution, the General Assembly invited United Nations entities to support, upon request, efforts to further strengthen the capacity of Member States for evaluation in accordance with their national policies and priorities.

40. In 2017, the Evaluation Office initiated a mapping exercise on national evaluation capacities, which is expected to inform strategies undertaken with sister United Nations agencies, including capacity-development activities, technical assistance to countries, knowledge management and peer exchange.

Supporting evaluation partnerships

41. The Evaluation Office will continue to co-lead EVALSDGs[4] and serve as an active member of the EvalPartners' Management Group.[5] Through EVALSDGs, UNICEF will continue to support the preparation of voluntary national reviews.

42. In addition, the Evaluation Office will undertake a review of the effectiveness and efficiency of its partnerships strategy, including with EvalPartners, EVALSDGs, the Global Parliamentarians Forum for Evaluation and the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action. It will increase its efforts to build partnerships at the regional level to support regional and country offices to more effectively contribute to national evaluation capacity development.

Enhancing evaluation quality and oversight

43. The Evaluation Office will seek to boost support to evaluation at the country- and regional-office levels through facilitation, guidance, tools, training and improved systems to enhance the quality, credibility and timeliness of evaluations and the purposeful application of evaluation results throughout the programme cycle. This work will also support the enhancement of evaluation skills and competencies among UNICEF staff and the establishment of an external evaluation advisory panel charged with providing technical advice upon request. To better enhance independence, the Office will seek to establish a pooled fund to reduce its reliance upon non-core resources (other resources) to fund evaluations.

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[3] See evalpartners.org.

[4] EVALSDGs is aimed at forming a strong evaluation partnership to inform, support, measure and assess development efforts around the Sustainable Development Goals.

[5] EvalPartners is managed by UNICEF and the International Organization for Cooperation in Evaluation, and supported by several partners, including International Development Evaluation Association; UN-Women; the United Nations Evaluation Group; the United Nations Development Programme; the International Labour Organization; the International Development Research Centre; the Rockefeller Foundation; BetterEvaluation; the Latin American Network of Evaluation, Systematization and Monitoring; the Programme for Strengthening the Regional Capacity for Evaluation of Rural Poverty-Alleviation Projects in Latin America and the Caribbean; the Agência Brasileira de Avaliaçao; the Sri Lanka Evaluation Association; and the International Program Evaluation Network.

Accelerating innovation and the use of evaluations

44. The acceleration of innovation in the use of evaluations will involve the further updating of user-friendly evaluation information systems, along with appropriate guidance and training, and integration with other corporate information systems in order to support innovation in knowledge management and oversight activities. This will include the further streamlining and strengthening of the Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System by means of integrating it into a comprehensive evaluation information system.

IX. Resource framework

45. The UNICEF integrated budget, 2018–2021 includes an approved provision of $11.6 million (excluding staff costs) for global evaluations and other key evaluation-related priorities. The other key evaluation-related priorities include (a) support for quality assurance; (b) technical guidance; (c) efforts to strengthen and professionalize the UNICEF evaluation function and underlying systems across the organization; and (d) the participation of the Evaluation Office in partnerships, networks and inter-agency initiatives aimed at strengthening and harmonizing evaluation within the United Nations system as well as in initiatives to develop national evaluation capacity. The $11.6 million figure includes both regular resources and other resources.

46. The global evaluations require funding of $7.77 million, which includes $4.07 million from regular resources and $3.7 million from other resources (see table 3). The Evaluation Office will undertake fundraising initiatives, including through thematic funding and the pool funding mechanism that was recommended by the 2017 UNEG peer review of the evaluation function of UNICEF.

Table 3
Annual resource framework for global evaluations, 2018–2021

	(In thousands of United States dollars)		
	Funding source		
Year	*RR*	*OR*	*Total*
2018	1 230	1 150	2 380
2019	1 320	950	3 270
2020	1 460	1 000	2 460
2021	60	600	660
Total	**4 070**	**3 700**	**7 770**

Abbreviations: RR = regular resources, OR = other resources (includes other resources emergency and other resources regular)
Note: The scope and implementation of OR-funded evaluations are subject to fundraising efforts.

47. Table 4 presents the resource framework for the evaluations listed in table 2. Table 4 includes evaluations that have been initiated and rolled over from the previous UNICEF integrated budget period (2014–2017) and will be submitted to the Executive Board in 2018. The rolled-over evaluations are budgeted at approximately $3.28 million.

Table 4
Resource framework by evaluation product, 2018–2021

Evaluation topic	*(In thousands of United States dollars)* *Funding required*		
	OR	*crb*	*Total*
Every child survives and thrives			
Evaluation of the H4+ Joint Programme (the joint initiative of six United Nations agencies for technical support of the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health)[a]			(Staff cost only)
Evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programmes to reduce stunting in children under five years of age[a]			(322)
Evaluation of the UNICEF programme on the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and paediatric AIDS[a]			(520)
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to health systems strengthening[a]			(500)
Evaluability assessment of scaling up early stimulation and care	60	0	60
Evaluation of UNICEF work in public health emergencies	350	100	450
Every child learns			
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to girls' education[a]			(467)
Evaluation of the Out-of-School Children Initiative[a]			(358)
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to education in humanitarian situations	350	100	450
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to improved teaching and learning	350	100	450
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to early learning	350	100	450
Evaluability assessment of scaling up inclusive education for children with disabilities	60	0	60
Every child is protected from violence and exploitation			
Joint evaluability assessment of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage (2018)[a]			(134)
Independent midterm review of the UNFPA-UNICEF Global Programme to Accelerate Action to End Child Marriage (2019)	0	100	100
Strengthening child protection systems: evaluation of UNICEF strategies and programme performance[a]			(376)
Evaluability assessment of child protection in conflict situations	60	0	60
Evaluation of the UNICEF-UNFPA joint programme on female genital mutilation/cutting	0	100	100
Evaluation of UNICEF work in strengthening civil registration and vital statistics systems	350	100	450
Every child lives in a safe and clean environment			
Evaluation of UNICEF drinking water supply programming in rural areas and small towns (2006-2016)[a]			(580)
Evaluability assessment of UNICEF work on children in cities	60		60
Evaluation of the provision of water, sanitation and hygiene in humanitarian situations	350	100	450
Evaluation of the UNICEF contribution to strengthening the enabling environment for water, sanitation and hygiene	350	100	450
Every child has an equitable chance in life			
Evaluability assessment of adolescent participation and empowerment	60	0	60
Evaluation of approaches to social protection programming in humanitarian situations, including cash-based programming	350	100	450

Evaluation topic	(In thousands of United States dollars) Funding required		
	RR	OR	Total
Children on the move: synthesis of evaluations on the UNICEF contribution	60	0	60
Humanitarian			
Towards improved emergency response: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016[a]			(75)
Evaluation of the coverage and quality of the UNICEF humanitarian response in complex and high-threat environments[a]			(500)
Evaluability assessment of the UNICEF contribution to enhancing humanitarian-development integration	60	0	60
Evaluations of Level 3 emergencies	0	1 200	1 200
Change strategies and enablers			
Evaluation of innovation in the work of UNICEF[a]			(450)
Evaluation of the UNICEF Gender Action Plan	350	150	500
Development effectiveness review of UNICEF	150	0	150
Evaluation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 (Goal Areas, change strategies and enablers)	350	150	500
Evaluating country programme results	0	1 200	1 200

[a] Carried over and funded from the UNICEF integrated budget, 2014–2017

48. The resource framework is intended to be a general guide rather than a strict budget. Some flexibility is required to meet ad hoc demands that may arise in the course of a given year and for participation in joint evaluations. Contingency funds may be required to address emerging issues that are in line with the overall priorities of the plan.

X. Implementation

49. A consultative approach, engaging the stakeholders concerned, will be undertaken in order to ensure the timely implementation of the evaluations and to maximize the use of the results. The approach to planning and delivering evaluations will necessarily be iterative and multilayered. At the level of annual workplans, further scoping work and consultation will be undertaken to identify evidence gaps, demands and opportunities in particular areas, with a view to elaborating a relevant and feasible evaluation agenda. At the level of each individual evaluation, scoping and design work will establish a meaningful, feasible and economical approach. Methods will be identified according to the requirements of the topic, as part of the scoping and design phases of specific evaluations.

XI. Risks

50. Risks to the delivery of the evaluations set out in the plan include the following: (a) the mobilization of other resources falls short of targets; (b) the execution of evaluations is delayed; and (c) the implementation of recommendations from evaluations is low.

51. A key assumption is that other resources can be mobilized each year at the level proposed. The Evaluation Office will increase its efforts to mobilize other resources in a timely manner and will report on progress made in its annual report to the Executive Board on the evaluation function in UNICEF. Possible delays will be minimized by the frequent updating of the roster of consultants. Regarding the execution of evaluations, the Office will also strengthen the organization's capacity for evaluation management. Reference groups for evaluations will be expanded to include external experts to expedite the quality assurance

of evaluation products. The Office will work closely with UNEG and other United Nations agencies to respond to the evolving requirements of a system-wide approach to strengthening evaluations. Innovation and new technology will enhance the use of evaluation more broadly and facilitate the role of UNICEF in supporting national efforts to generate and use evaluation evidence.

XII. Reporting

52. Progress in the implementation of the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 will be reported in the annual report on the evaluation function in UNICEF, which is presented to the Executive Board each year.

XIII. Draft decision

The Executive Board

1. *Endorses* the plan for global evaluations, 2018–2021 (E/ICEF/2018/3);

2. *Takes note of* the evaluation synthesis report entitled "Towards improved emergency responses: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016", and acknowledges its findings, conclusions and recommendations;

3. *Welcomes* the management response to the evaluation synthesis report (E/ICEF/2018/5);

4. *Also welcomes* the commitment of UNICEF to continue to improve its performance in humanitarian contexts;

5. *Requests* UNICEF to take the evaluation recommendations into account in future policy guidance and programming.

United Nations E/ICEF/2018/4

Economic and Social Council

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For decision

United Nations Children's Fund
Executive Board
First regular session 2018
6–8 February 2018
Item 9 of the provisional agenda*

Towards improved emergency responses: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016

Executive summary**

Summary

Around the world, more than half a billion children live in countries affected by conflict and disasters. In too many parts of the world, children and young people have been caught up in emergencies that have put their lives and well-being at risk and, all too often, have taken those young lives. UNICEF plays a major role in the efforts of the international community to address humanitarian emergencies. UNICEF expenditure on humanitarian assistance in 2016 constituted nearly half of the organization's total expenditure at the country level.

In recent years, UNICEF has worked hard to improve the support and services it provides to the children and communities affected by emergencies. Evaluations have contributed to these efforts and have helped UNICEF to learn lessons and improve its capacity to respond quickly and effectively to emergencies. In the period 2016–2017, the UNICEF Evaluation Office synthesized 30 humanitarian evaluations undertaken from 2010 to 2016. The report tells an encouraging story of progress and improvement. UNICEF is shown to have learned from experience and adapted its approach in order to become faster and more effective, while contributing to the wider reforms of the humanitarian system. Important results have been achieved for children through work in key sectors and across many locations. However, several areas of weakness remain, and the report draws conclusions and makes recommendations intended to support further improvements in the organization's approach and performance at a time when the world faces immense humanitarian challenges.

* E/ICEF/2018/1.

** The executive summary of the evaluation report is being circulated in all official languages. The full report is available in English from the UNICEF Evaluation Office website (see annex).

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I. Introduction

1. The past decade has seen unprecedented change in the humanitarian landscape. Concurrent complex and protracted emergencies have resulted in vastly increased numbers of vulnerable children. In the 1990s, during any given year, approximately 66 million children lived in countries affected by armed conflict, violence, disaster and chronic crises. In 2016, that number rose to an estimated 535 million — nearly a quarter of the world's children.[1] It is estimated that by 2018 half the world's poor will live in fragile situations.[2]

2. At the same time, the global humanitarian system has changed radically. Following the identification of weaknesses[3] in the international response to emergencies in 2010, the humanitarian system has sought stronger leadership, greater coordination and increased accountability for humanitarian action. UNICEF, as a leading humanitarian actor, has played a critical role in these global humanitarian reforms.

3. Faced with rapidly increasing needs, the organization's humanitarian expenditure grew from just over $900 million in 2012 to $2.1 billion in 2015.[4] Such substantial expenditure has increased the organizational focus on improving systems and approaches for emergency preparedness and response. It has also intensified calls for UNICEF to prioritize learning from and being accountable for its humanitarian action.

4. The present synthesis report brings together the findings of 30 evaluations of humanitarian action. They span the period from 2010, when UNICEF underwent the formative experience of the Haiti earthquake and the Pakistan floods, through to 2016, when its responses to the Ebola and Central African Republic crises were evaluated.

5. The synthesis asks three questions:

(a) How has UNICEF performed with respect to humanitarian action from 2010 to 2016, and how has it improved over time?

(b) What factors have supported or constrained improvement?

(c) What can be learned and what improvements can be made for the future?

6. The synthesis, which updates a similar exercise conducted in 2013, is aimed at supporting accountability, contributing to learning and helping UNICEF to realize its humanitarian objectives for the vulnerable children it serves.

II. Arrangement of UNICEF for humanitarian action

7. Although reforms to the humanitarian system began in 2005, the year 2010 was a watershed for the humanitarian community. Emergency responses to crises in Haiti and Pakistan exposed critical flaws and gaps in the coordination of large, complex emergencies. The collective experience triggered the Transformative Agenda, which insituted major changes in the way humanitarian responses were implemented, organized and arranged. In 2014, the Core

[1] UNICEF, "Nearly a quarter of the world's children live in conflict or disaster-stricken countries", UNICEF Humanitarian Action for Children Report, 2017.

[2] Chandy, L., N. Ledlie and V. Penciakova, "The final countdown: prospects for ending extreme poverty by 2030" (interactive), April 24, 2013, Brookings Institution, Washington DC. Available from www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/2013/ending-extreme-poverty

[3] Grünewald, F. and A. Binder, "Inter-agency real-time evaluation in Haiti: 3 months after the earthquake", Groupe URD and Global Public Policy Institute, 2010.

[4] Source: UNICEF internal expenditure data.

Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability[5] was adopted by many humanitarian organizations.[6]

8. In June 2016, the World Humanitarian Summit addressed such topics as humanitarian financing; bridging the humanitarian-development divide; strengthening local ownership of responses; and accountability to affected populations (AAP). The Summit outcomes included the Grand Bargain on flexible and appropriate funding.

9. At the same time, UNICEF undertook its own corporate reform process. In 2010, it published its revised Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCC),[7] which form the central programmatic framework for its humanitarian action. Based upon international human rights, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and international humanitarian law, the CCC's define operational commitments for UNICEF-led humanitarian action. They can be applied in acute and protracted humanitarian situations, and their sector-specific programme commitments define minimum achievements to be realized for all children affected by an emergency. The CCCs are designed to support wider inter-agency cluster coordination.

10. Other reforms, enacted in particular following a critical evaluation of the UNICEF response to the Haiti emergency in 2010,[8] included:

(a) The reinstatement of the fast-track recruitment process for emergencies, the absence of which severely constrained scale-up in Haiti;[9]

(b) New structures for emergency response, with the overall framework provided by the Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure, introduced in March 2011,[10] and including the Simplified Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPs) for Level 3 emergencies;[11]

(c) The introduction of Humanitarian Performance Monitoring (HPM) indicators to enable the systematic corporate measurement of emergency responses.

11. The Strengthening Humanitarian Action initiative, carried out in 2013 and 2014, refined these new systems. Examples of changes include:

(a) New guidance on cluster coordination, preparedness and children and armed conflict;

(b) Strengthened humanitarian leadership training;

(c) A more formalized emergency recruitment system.

12. In 2013, Level 2 SSOPs were introduced to address large-scale emergencies that remain below the Level 3 threshold. The Level 3 SSOPs were revised in 2015 after the conclusion

[5] The Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability sets out nine commitments that organizations and individuals involved in humanitarian response can use to improve the quality and effectiveness of the assistance they provide. The standard was devised to clarify the responsibilities of aid workers, simplify the implementation of humanitarian standards and contribute to better humanitarian responses.

[6] UNICEF committed to the Core Humanitarian Standard at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

[7] UNICEF, *Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action*, 2010.

[8] UNICEF, Independent review of UNICEF's operational response to the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, 2011.

[9] Enrico Leonardi, Jessica Alexander, and David Bassiouni, "Review of the fast track recruitment process", UNICEF Division of Human Resources, 2013.

[10] Executive Directive CF/EXD/2011-001, 21 March 2011, "UNICEF's Corporate Emergency Activation Procedure".

[11] Executive Directive CF/EXD/2012-001, 1 March 2012, "Simplified StandardOperating Procedures (SSOPs) pertaining to UNICEF's Corporate EmergencyActivation Procedure".

of the Strengthening Humanitarian Action initiative. Since their development, these strengthened procedures have been tested in many different emergencies, including in conflict-related crises in the Central African Republic and South Sudan in 2013; the natural disaster of Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines in the same year; the insurgency faced by Iraq from 2014; and in the complex and protracted Syrian Arab Republic regional emergency, which has continued since 2011. The application of the new procedures in these different situations has generated much experience and learning.

III. UNICEF evaluative coverage of humanitarian action

13. In addition to evaluation, UNICEF assesses its humanitarian action by means of lessons learned and reviews.[12] However, with its dual emphasis on accountability and learning, evaluation can offer an especially rigorous evidence base. This section of the report describes the evaluative coverage of UNICEF humanitarian action between 2010 and 2016.

14. The institutional systems of UNICEF suggest "triggers" to evaluate its humanitarian action. According to the 2013 Evaluation Policy, the triggers include scale (when responding to major humanitarian emergencies) and/or expenditure (when more than $10 million is spent per programme outcome component). Level 3 SSOPs also integrate evaluation as part of the programme cycle.

15. UNICEF-commissioned evaluations covering topics from preparedness through response and recovery comprised 76 out of 623 evaluations or evaluative documents produced between 2010 and 2016.[13] Twelve large humanitarian evaluations covered more than half — 53 per cent ($1.57 billion) — of the total humanitarian expenditure on Level 2 and Level 3 responses ($3 billion), thus covering a significant portion of UNICEF expenditures.

Summary

16. Most sectors have been well explored, with education being the most prominent in stand-alone sector-specific evaluations. Health has been, for the most part, well covered in multisector evaluations. The only "pure" health emergency in the reviewed period was the Ebola outbreak in West Africa, which was addressed by a stand-alone evaluation.

17. The 76 evaluations of humanitarian action were undertaken across all seven regions in which UNICEF engages. They addressed six of the seven sectors in the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2014-2017,[14] with just over half covering multisector humanitarian responses. Emergencies linked to natural disasters were the most-evaluated type of emergency, followed by those associated with conflict. A substantial proportion of humanitarian evaluations also covered global approaches or emergency-related systems.

18. Perhaps because of the triggers for evaluation, all the Level 3 responses and most Level 2 responses since 2012 have been evaluated, either by an inter-agency or UNICEF-specific study.[15] Most of these evaluations were commissioned centrally, rather than by country or

[12] To ensure that the synthesis of evaluations was balanced by such complementary evidence, a separate synthesis of non-evaluative work has served to validate the present analysis. The non-evaluative work provided knowledge of a more operational nature than that found in formal evaluations.

[13] The evaluation count of all reports published in the UNICEF Evaluation and Research Database was taken in November 2016.

[14] Excluding HIV/AIDS in emergencies, for which no evaluation was available.

[15] An inter-agency humanitarian evaluation of the Iraq response was planned, but has been suspended. Emergencies in the Nigeria region and in Yemen were evaluated recently, but the reports were not released in time to be included in the present synthesis. The Level 2 response to the storms in the Pacific Islands has not been formally evaluated.

regional offices. Thus, the bulk of humanitarian action taking place below the Level 2 and Level 3 classifications remains unevaluated. In spite of the corporate triggers, UNICEF is reliant upon the willingness and ability of country and regional offices to undertake the evaluation of humanitarian action.

19. The synthesis concluded that UNICEF could gain substantial added value by linking up responses in closely related sectors in the same crisis. For example, two evaluations of emergency response in Jordan were conducted in 2015, covering two interrelated sectors (education and child protection). Neither references the other, nor makes explicit any connections to closely related sectors.

20. The evaluations considered in the synthesis did not systematically address the CCCs, as they did not in the 2013 synthesis, nor did they analyse adherence to international humanitarian principles,[16] as was also noted by the United Nations Evaluation Group in its 2016 working paper "Reflecting humanitarian principles in evaluation".

IV. Conduct of the synthesis and limitations

21. The present synthesis has been developed from a selection of 30 evaluations out of a wider pool of 76 evaluations on the basis of the following criteria:

(a) Only documents with a strongly evaluative approach were included. This excluded, for example, reviews, research reports and other material, such as lessons learned documents;

(b) Only reports receiving at least a "satisfactory" rating according to the UNICEF quality assurance mechanism for evaluations[17] were included, to ensure that evidence was sufficiently valid and reliable.

22. Two other forms of evidence provided triangulation:

(a) Inter-agency humanitarian evaluations, which provide evidence of the system- wide response, but do not report on UNICEF performance specifically;[18]

(b) The 2017 report "Learning from humanitarian action: a synthesis of non-evaluative documents on UNICEF's humanitarian action from 2010–2016", which brings together evidence from reviews and other relevant sources.

23. The 30 evaluations cover all major emergencies to which UNICEF has responded since 2010, excluding those in Iraq, South Sudan and the Horn of Africa, which were addressed or intended to be addressed through inter-agency evaluations.

Process

24. The 30 evaluations were systematically reviewed, with the consistent extraction of key findings ensured by the application of an analytical framework[19] including the evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence and coordination as well as other areas of analytical interest. A second-layer quality assessment for individual data elements was then applied. Evidence was rated for validity and reliability on a scale of 1 (low) to 4

[16] Humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence.

[17] The UNICEF Global Evaluation Reports Oversight System; details available from unicef.org/evaluation/index_GEROS.html.

[18] Conducted to date for the Central African Republic, Typhoon Haiyan and South Sudan crises.

[19] See annex 2 of the full synthesis report "Towards improved emergency responses: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016" for further details on the methodology.

(high), with only reliable evidence — scoring at least 2 — included. This approach allowed the strength of evidence underlying each finding to be made explicit.

Table 1
Characteristics of included evaluations

Key characteristics	*Number of evaluations*
Evaluation of global operational systems	3
Evaluation of global approaches or key humanitarian functions of UNICEF	4
Evaluation of multi-country responses	5
Evaluation of single-country responses	18
Total	**30**

Limitations

25. The main limitations of the synthesis are: (a) its reliance on evidence from its component evaluations; and (b) its reference period of 2010 to 2016, which restricts the illustration of corporate changes within UNICEF that are not yet reflected in evaluations. Nonetheless, the breadth and depth of the evidence base — 30 high-quality evaluations conducted over a six-year period — enable the synthesis to provide an accurate reflection of the performance of UNICEF in humanitarian action between 2010 and 2016.

V. Findings

A. Relevance of UNICEF humanitarian action to humanitarian needs

Limited prioritization of needs assessments within humanitarian action

26. Despite evidence of UNICEF advocacy within United Nations country teams for multi-cluster initial rapid assessment (MIRA), the evaluations reflected continuing deficiencies in its swift implementation. The 2013 synthesis identified weaknesses in UNICEF needs assessments, specifically, finding that they did not take place, were incomplete or provided only general situation analyses.

27. In 2017, needs assessment was the focus of 14 out of 30 evaluations; 4 of these evaluations praised the UNICEF prioritization of needs assessments.[20] However, 10 out of 14 evaluations found gaps or limitations in needs assessment:

(a) In the response to the Nepal earthquake in 2015, UNICEF failed to convince the international community to implement MIRA, but instead of conducting its own assessments, it relied on limited government data. A similar critique was made of the response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines (2013–2014);

(b) Caseload analyses were insufficiently detailed. Although in some instances, caseload estimations were based upon Standardized Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions surveys, these provide only a very broad picture of needs, as the evaluation of the Sahel food and nutrition crisis response points out;

[20] Two corporate initiatives: the Peacebuilding, Education and Advocacy programme and the Rapid Response to Population Movements initiative in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and two emergency responses: to the cholera outbreak in Haiti (2010–2015) and the nutrition crisis in Somalia (2011–2012).

(c) There were gaps in consultations with affected communities, e.g., during the Sahel food crisis (2010–2011); in the response to Typhoon Haiyan (2013–2014); and in the Central African Republic (2013–2015).

Strong alignment with humanitarian needs

28. Despite these gaps, the majority of relevant evaluations (18 out of 27) found the UNICEF programme responses to be broadly aligned with humanitarian needs. However, 9 out of 27 evaluations identified opportunity-based rather than needs-based programming. This occurred in at least four major emergencies spanning 2010 to 2016: the Sahel crisis (2010–2011); the Central African Republic (2013–2015); some elements of the Typhoon Haiyan response in 2013; and the response to the Syrian Arab Republic regional emergency (2011–2015).

29. Three evaluations also found coverage gaps. In the North Yemen and Sahel crises (2010–2011), programme responses did not address all the needs that fell within the UNICEF purview. During the Ebola outbreak in West and Central Africa (2014–2015), the UNICEF response neither promptly nor adequately addressed the serious secondary humanitarian consequences of Ebola for the protection, general health and education of children.

B. Appropriateness of the strategies or designs used for UNICEF humanitarian action

Mixed picture, but willingness to adapt

30. Programme strategies or designs were found to be appropriate in just under half of the evaluations that assessed country- or regional-level responses, although UNICEF showed a willingness and ability to adapt when necessary. Examples include:

(a) A calculated risk to apply a cash and vouchers response to the Horn of Africa drought in Somalia in the period 2011–2012 paid off: markets responded and people could buy needed food at reasonable prices;

(b) In Pakistan, in response to a large public hygiene crisis following floods in 2011, UNICEF chose a development-focused approach geared to longer-term behaviour change, which addressed underlying vulnerabilities more sustainably than short-term relief would have;

(c) In the North Yemen (2010) and Rwanda (2012–2013) crises, incorrect assumptions made at the outset were course-corrected quickly in response to the reality on the ground.

Weak strategic frameworks or designs

31. Of the 14 evaluations that identified weaknesses, the main concern related to a limited or absent strategic framework at the outset. For example:

(a) In the Central African Republic, the UNICEF approach (in common with the wider United Nations response)[21] was characterized as reactive, ad hoc planning in emergency mode, rather than being based upon a strategic vision with medium- to longer-term goals;

[21] Inter-agency humanitarian evaluation, Central African Republic, 2016.

(b) In the Syrian Arab Republic regional crisis, UNICEF lacked an initial strategy to link systematic situation analysis and needs and vulnerability assessments with programme decisions.

32. The evaluations also found that the assumptions made in design were often linked to weak needs assessments. For example, in the Typhoon Haiyan response of 2013, the UNICEF response of setting up child-friendly schools as the primary child protection response was based upon the assumption that such schools were unquestionably the most appropriate child protection response to an emergency. The evaluation found, however, that communities had articulated needs and priorities for which child-friendly schools were not the appropriate response.

C. Alignment of UNICEF humanitarian action with national priorities

Strong alignment with national priorities where conditions permitted

33. Twelve out of the 18 evaluations that assessed the alignment of UNICEF humanitarian action with national priorities found that UNICEF humanitarian action was well-aligned with national priorities, where conditions permitted. This was largely due to an explicit focus on alignment in design, e.g., in the response to the Nepal earthquake and Typhoon Haiyan. In Turkey, alignment was helped by strong national ownership of the humanitarian response to the Syrian Arab Republic regional crisis.

34. Six evaluations found weaknesses. These arose mainly from two gaps:

(a) Insufficient consideration of local systems, e.g., setting up child-friendly schools in the Philippines during the Typhoon Haiyan response and in support of Syrian child refugees in Jordan, which were in competition with local schools or early childhood care;

(b) Delinking from relevant national mechanisms or policies, particularly where these were institutionally weak, e.g., the national systems for food security and nutrition during the Sahel crisis or, more recently, national priorities for health-systems strengthening, which became overwhelmed during the Ebola crisis.

D. Alignment of UNICEF humanitarian action with key international principles

Limited evidence and context-based challenges in alignment with the international humanitarian principles and the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action

35. The only three evaluations to assess the international humanitarian principles of neutrality, impartiality, independence and humanity[22] raise familiar dilemmas. They point to challenges for UNICEF with regard to the need to align its response with that of national authorities, while meeting the needs of affected populations. Evaluations of UNICEF responses in Nepal and the Syrian Arab Republic voice this concern, as does the evaluation of the UNICEF cluster lead agency role.

36. Just 10 of the 30 evaluations systematically assessed the CCCs. Three of these[23] found UNICEF humanitarian action to be well aligned with the CCCs, while the remaining seven evaluations found a mixed picture or gaps. All seven argue for greater contextualization of

[22] See https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/OOM-humanitarianprinciples_eng_June12.pdf.

[23] The response to the Nepal earthquake, the provision of psychosocial support for Syrian children in Jordan and the UNICEF Supply Division's emergency response.

the CCCs to the different emergency types currently faced by UNICEF and other international actors, including slow-onset crises; crises with strong protection dimensions, such as in the Syrian Arab Republic regional crisis; protracted emergencies; or public health emergencies, such as the Ebola epidemic.

E. Performance of UNICEF humanitarian action against intended targets

Mixed performance in achieving results

37. As in the 2013 synthesis, around half of the evaluations of UNICEF humanitarian action contained solid evidence of results. The objectives of UNICEF and/or the output and outcome targets for the interventions were also met or exceeded in half of the evaluations, with the remaining half finding moderate or mixed performance. Most evaluations reported on output targets, applying HPM indicators, and 13 of those indicated that the output targets were met or exceeded.

38. Some evaluations found overall positive achievement against objectives, but mixed performance within various programmatic areas. For example, in the response to Typhoon Haiyan, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education and health interventions performed well against intended targets, but nutrition and child protection initiatives struggled to meet their targets, in part due to the overestimation of the number of children to be reached, and no subsequent adjustments of the caseloads.

Significant outcome-level gains

39. Evaluations also recorded some significant outcome-level results arising either as a direct result of UNICEF interventions (attribution) or with UNICEF interventions playing a significant role (contribution). These include:

(a) The reduction of disease prevalence and the prevention of further infection in Haiti in 2013; during the Typhoon Haiyan response in 2013; and in the Somalia (2011), Ebola (2014–2015) and Nepal (2015) responses;

(b) Changes in community behaviour as a consequence of the Ebola response;

(c) Children returned to their families and children going back to school after the Nepal earthquake (2015);

(d) The release of children and reunification in several child protection interventions in emergencies.

F. National and local capacity built by UNICEF humanitarian action

Strong results in systems strengthening

40. A key achievement of UNICEF humanitarian action, identified in both the 2013 and 2017 syntheses, has been the successful strengthening of national and local systems for emergency preparedness and response. National-level capacity gains due to UNICEF interventions were identified in 10 evaluations and local-level improvements in 12. Two main factors enabled these achievements: (a) the embedding of a strong systems-building approach from the start, e.g., in the Central African Republic and within the Peacebuilding Education and Advocacy programme; and/or (b) the adoption of active approaches to support the national ownership of initiatives, e.g., in Nepal and North Yemen.

41. Fifteen evaluations found that the intended results were not achieved. The reasons for this include:

(a) Technical weaknesses in the design of the intervention;

(b) Coverage limitations, particularly for nutrition, WASH and education interventions, where UNICEF did not always work in all areas of need;

(c) Overly ambitious targets, such as in the Syrian Arab Republic, where implementation was also dependent upon partner capacity;

(d) Delivery of short-term results, but limited long-term effects, e.g., in child-friendly schools in the Philippines (2014) and Liberia (2013);

(e) The need for a more structured, less ad hoc approach to working with Governments, e.g., in the Philippines during Typhoon Haiyan and in the Syrian Arab Republic regional crisis.

C. Timeliness of the UNICEF humanitarian response

External factors have impeded timeliness

42. External factors that have hindered the speed of the UNICEF (and the international) response include late national and international declarations of non-sudden onset crises, such as in the Syrian Arab Republic regional conflict, and the late recognition of emergencies by other key international actors, as in the Ebola crisis in West Africa. Underfunding and delays in donor funding and the unavailability of pooled funding mechanisms have also constrained quick responses on the ground.

Mixed performance in timeliness continues

43. Both the 2013 and 2017 syntheses found mixed timeliness with regard to the UNICEF humanitarian response. Seven of the 22 evaluations analysed in 2017 found the overall response to be timely. The revised Level 2 and Level 3 SSOPs have been a major contributory factor here, with benefits — applied across emergency responses —that include:

(a) The rapid deployment of immediate response teams;

(b) The fast-tracking of human resource and recruitment processes;

(c) Swift procurement processes;

(d) The fast-tracking of other administrative requirements.

44. However, seven evaluations found some staff reluctant to apply the new SSOPs, particularly given financial accountability risks relating to Programme Cooperation Agreements (PCAs) with partners. This reluctance delayed the processing of up to five months of agreements during the Typhoon Haiyan disaster, the Syrian Arab Republic regional emergency and the Central African Republic crisis.

45. Slower-than-necessary responses, found in 15 of the 22 evaluations, related mostly to a slow start-up that gained momentum, such as in the Syrian Arab Republic regional response, or a swift start-up that encountered delays once the immediate response was under way, e.g., in the response to the Van-Ercis earthquake in Turkey (2011) and the Mali crisis (2012).

H. Cost-effectiveness of the UNICEF humanitarian response

Costs reasonable for the response

46. For the 14 humanitarian evaluations that had information available, the majority (10 out of 14) found costs to be reasonable for the response. Evaluations identified some strong efforts to produce efficiency gains, such as in Jordan, where the cost of psychosocial support per child was reduced by almost half. Both evaluations that assessed the cost-effectiveness of cash transfers in emergencies (Nepal earthquake and Somalia) found high levels of cost-efficiency.

Weaknesses arising from context

47. Weaknesses in cost-efficiency were specific to context, including expensive sanitation solutions during the cholera outbreak in Haiti and high transaction costs with implementing partners during the Typhoon Haiyan response.

I. Connectedness of UNICEF interventions to other UNICEF operations in the country

Suspension of existing country programmes to address emergencies

48. Under the UNICEF Level 2 and Level 3 emergency procedures, if a sudden-onset crisis occurs, country programmes can be suspended in order to direct resources towards immediate needs. All sudden-onset emergencies assessed for this synthesis report (Typhoon Haiyan and the earthquakes in Haiti and Nepal) resulted in the suspension of the existing UNICEF country programmes.

Weak links from emergency to development programmes

49. Ten evaluations assessed links to country operations. Nine of these found a lack of connection between emergency responses and country (often development-oriented) programmes, e.g., in the responses to the Central African Republic emergency and Typhoon Haiyan. In these situations, the roles of country office staff were left unclear and sometimes bypassed during the emergency. As well as complicating coordination on the ground, this left a difficult legacy for the country office once the emergency was over.

J. Extent of the linkage of UNICEF humanitarian action to transition

External factors hindered links to transition and resilience

50. The evaluations identified a range of external factors that hindered planning for transition and resilience, including (a) a lack of external funding for post-emergency recovery efforts, e.g., in the Central African Republic and Ebola crises; (b) the inability to "flex" donor funding streams from development to emergency and vice-versa; and (c) unclear policy guidance on early recovery and transition within the CCCs, as the Nepal earthquake evaluation pointed out.

Room for improvement in linking emergency response to transition

51. Overall, 17 out of the 20 evaluations found that UNICEF had not yet successfully integrated links to transition, even during more recent crises, such as the responses to the Syrian Arab Republic regional crisis and the Ebola emergency. Lessons identified by the evaluations include:

(a) The importance of preparedness, and particularly the ability to flex programming and capacities from development to emergency and vice-versa;

(a) Where plans are present, the need for overall consistency, with variation among sector plans;

(b) The need to seize opportunities to address social change.

(c) The need to participate in national assessments and planning for recovery and reconstruction;

(d) The importance of moving from emergency to transition as soon as conditions permit;

(e) The need for clarity regarding the process of exit from emergency procedures and related processes, such as the withdrawal of the immediate response team.

K. Integration of UNICEF humanitarian action across sectors

Limited integration of humanitarian action

52. The UNICEF structure of distinct programme sections, mirroring the sectoral division of the CCCs, does not facilitate cross-sectoral links. Only two of the evaluations analysed found well-integrated responses and three noted gradual improvements over time. Weak integration arose mainly from:

(a) Needs assessments that were insufficiently holistic to set the basis for a better integrated response;

(b) A lack of inter-sectional planning and preparedness, including of the integration of actions with common objectives to avoid supply-driven responses, identified in 11 evaluations;

(c) A lack of internal operational coordination, identified in 11 evaluations, sometimes despite strong planning within documentation;

(d) Siloed approaches by sector at the regional office, which also influenced country office implementation.

L. Coherence of UNICEF humanitarian action in relation to that of partners operating in the humanitarian context

Coherence is fundamental to the operating modalities of UNICEF

53. UNICEF is the cluster lead or co-lead at the global and country levels for the WASH, education and nutrition clusters, and leads the area of responsibility for child protection. Coherence is therefore an integral part of its operating modalities.

Strong coherence with strategic response plans and national government plans

54. The evaluations found the strategic planning of UNICEF to be mostly coherent with strategic response plans at the country level. The strongest area of partnership was with national Government or authorities. In Turkey, for example, UNICEF applied its close working relationship with the Ministry of Education to help widen access for the education component of its response to previously inaccessible host communities. During the Typhoon Haiyan response, UNICEF signed memorandums of understanding with 40 local government units in affected areas of the Philippines in which it had not worked previously.

Mixed experience in partnerships with other United Nations agencies, but effective cluster leadership

55. The evaluations found some weaknesses in partnerships with other United Nations agencies. These arose in part from a systemic lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities, e.g., in the initial phases of the Syrian Arab Republic regional response. The UNICEF cluster leadership at the country level was found to be broadly effective, although roles at the regional and global levels were not always clear.

Non-governmental organizations mostly assessed as implementing partners

56. Partnerships with non-governmental organizations have generally been regarded as implementing partnerships and discussed in relation to the activation of PCAs. The importance of standby partnerships as part of emergency preparedness is emphasized in the Nepal evaluation,[24] which found no standby or contingency PCAs in place.

Willingness to engage with non-traditional partners

57. Several evaluations found innovative engagement with non-traditional partners, including peace committees, religious institutions and conflict mediation groups. Collaboration with the private sector was commended in the evaluations of the rapid response to population movements in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the emergency cash transfer programme in Somalia.

Lessons regarding UNICEF partnerships

58. Lessons documented by the evaluations include:

(a) The need for an explicit partnership strategy, rather than an ad hoc approach, including how government or national authority capacity should be developed or maintained;

(b) The need to recognize, in contracting with large international organizations, that they work through local implementing partners, adding an additional administrative layer and incurring a degree of risk.

M. Integration of UNICEF cross-cutting issues into humanitarian action

Inconsistent attention to equity, protection and accountability to affected populations

(a) Equity: The 2013 synthesis found inconsistent attention to equity, linked to limited needs assessment, in UNICEF humanitarian action. The 2017 synthesis had similar findings: 7 out of 17 evaluations found that UNICEF humanitarian action had successfully integrated equity concerns. However, 10 evaluations found that the issue lacked systematic attention, leading to a range of specific equity gaps, identified when the UNICEF response was evaluated as a whole. Gender (in five responses), age (in two) and disability (in six) were identified as the main equity gaps;

(b) Protection: UNICEF has issued its own minimum standards for child protection in emergencies as part of the CCCs. However, it relies heavily upon other partners to support a wider protective environment.[25] The limited evidence available found inconsistent treatment of the issue. UNICEF took a strongly proactive approach to

[24] Volker Hahn, "Learning from humanitarian action: a synthesis of non-evaluative documents on UNICEF's humanitarian action from 2010–2016", internal unpublished document, 2017.

[25] See www.unicef.org/protection/57929_62178.html.

protection in the Central African Republic, but five evaluations found weaknesses, including in the Nepal earthquake response and the Syrian refugee response in Turkey;

(c) Accountability to affected populations: The evaluations found that UNICEF has not yet systematically integrated AAP practices into its humanitarian action overall. Of the 16 evaluations undertaken after the Inter-Agency Standing Committee endorsed the Commitments on Accountability to Affected Populations, in December 2011,[26] only 5 found UNICEF to have fully or gradually implemented AAP commitments.

N. Institutional factors affecting UNICEF humanitarian action

Institutional factors identified

59. The synthesis identified evidence of common institutional characteristics or systems positively and negatively affecting UNICEF humanitarian action. These are summarized in table 2.

Table 2
Institutional factors

Factor	*Supported*	*Constrained*
Emergency preparedness	Has supported responses where present, as in Nepal	
Regional-country coordination	Level 2 and Level 3 procedures have supported timely immediate responses, including support from the regional office	Different interpretations of the Simplified Standard Operating Procedures at the country level have at times impeded efficiency and effectiveness
Management/staffing/ human resources, including surge mechanisms	Has been supported by Level 2 and Level 3 procedures, which have enabled, for example regional surge rosters	Commonly reported as a major constraint, with staffing gaps prominent in several emergency responses
Supply and logistics	Has supported the efficiency and effectiveness of responses	Weak or inconsistent end-use monitoring identified
Performance measurement of humanitarian action	Has supported the consistency of performance measurement across different response types	There is a need for increased context specificity, particularly in the varying types of emergency UNICEF now faces
Communications and advocacy	Have played key roles in both awareness and funding for the crisis, and have also made a substantive contribution in, for example, the Ebola crisis	Lacking staff capacity at times

Mixed evidence of attention to preparedness

60. Preparedness is a corporate commitment under the CCCs. Ten evaluations comment (explicitly or implicitly) on preparedness issues. Three found UNICEF to be well prepared to engage in humanitarian action. Where preparedness was assessed as insufficient (7 out of 10 evaluations), lessons include:

(a) Preparedness plans should be current, regularly updated, concrete and tangible;

[26] Available from https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-affected-populations-including-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse.

(b) Plans should scale up well, even in major emergencies;

(c) Plans should address relationships and the working arrangements with government partners;

(d) PCAs require emergency clauses;

(e) Offices should have dedicated staff responsible for emergency preparedness and response.

Strong regional-country office coordination

61. Eight evaluations praise the role of the UNICEF regional offices in supporting the internal coordination of humanitarian action. Specific contributions included:

(a) Joint fundraising;

(b) Supply and logistics support;

(c) The provision of surge capacity;

(d) General technical assistance;

(e) Communication, advocacy and donor relations;

(f) Research support and/or lesson sharing.

Progress on staffing for emergencies, but with challenges remaining

62. Seventeen of the 30 evaluations, as well as non-evaluative material,[27] comment upon UNICEF management, staffing and human resources for emergencies. Positively, evaluations found that the Level 2 or Level 3 SSOPs have supported the swift mobilization of surge human resources, as in the Sahel, Nepal and Typhoon Haiyan disasters and in the Central African Republic. A 2012 review of the fast-track recruitment process found the mechanism to be effective in getting the right people with the right skills on the ground at the right time.

63. Nevertheless, the speedy and sustainable staffing of emergency operations remains challenging. Evaluations have found:

(a) An over-reliance on short-term deployments, limiting institutional memory in the responses in Yemen (2010), Rwanda (2014) and Turkey and Jordan (both evaluated in 2015);

(b) The ad hoc identification of human resources, e.g., in the Syrian Arab Republic regional crisis;

(c) A focus on programme staff to the detriment of administrative and budgetary functions, e.g., in the Mali response of 2013;

(d) An insufficient use of national staff in the Central African Republic in the period 2013–2014 and the Philippines in 2014.

Strong supply and logistics functions supporting efficient response

64. Eight evaluations comment on the UNICEF supply and logistics capacity in supporting humanitarian response. All eight found it to have positively affected the timeliness of the response, with supplies properly planned, pre-positioned and mobilized in time according to response plans. One remaining concern is the low frequency of end-user monitoring of

[27] Huls, "Learning from humanitarian action" (see footnote 24).

supplies, although this was assessed in only 5 out of the 30 evaluations. Of these five, only the Syrian Arab Republic regional response evaluation findings were positive, with the other four finding gaps or deficits with respect to end-user monitoring.

A need to revisit results measuring and reporting systems for emergencies

65. Since the Haiti earthquake of 2011, UNICEF has invested in a corporate system of HPM that establishes a set of common indicators linked to the CCCs, harmonizing progress reporting across different emergencies. Despite some significant progress, of 24 relevant evaluations, just 4 assessed the work of UNICEF positively, while the remaining 20 found challenges. Evaluations signaled a particular challenge regarding the HPM standard indicators, arguing for greater adaptability to context to better reflect the varying emergencies. Specifically, the evaluations of the crisis responses to the Nepal earthquake and in the Central African Republic and of the role of UNICEF as a cluster lead agency found that the HPM approach was too rigid or formal to meet fluid circumstances on the ground. For the Ebola response, the HPM approach was found to be unsuitable for a health emergency.[28]

66. Monitoring systems used to assess progress against HPM indicators were also found wanting. Evaluations found these systems to be:

(a) Incomplete or unrealistic in some contexts, e.g., the response to the floods in Pakistan (2013) or the Sahel food crisis (2012);

(b) Inconsistently implemented, e.g., in the Rwanda response (2014), in the Van-Ercis earthquake response in Turkey (2015) and during the Ebola outbreak (2014-2015);

(c) Too centralized, e.g., Manila during the Typhoon Haiyan response (2014), or running in parallel in different sectors, e.g., the Nepal earthquake response (2015);

(d) Challenging for partners, e.g., the child-friendly schools programme in the Philippines (2014) and the response to floods in Pakistan (2013).

67. Collectively, these deficiencies caused accountability shortcomings, limited the ability of UNICEF to report on performance and undermined its ability to make a clear, data-driven case for support.

Communications and advocacy supporting emergency response

68. Fourteen of the 30 evaluations praise UNICEF communication and advocacy in emergencies, with these playing substantive as well as process-support roles. Examples include the Sahel crisis, where social media was used for advocacy, and the Syrian Arab Republic regional crisis, where advocacy efforts helped to realize child rights. During the Ebola crisis, the use of communication for development approaches provided substantive gains in terms of community behaviour change.

VI. Conclusions

69. Overall, the 2017 synthesis of 30 evaluations of humanitarian action reflects an organization that has evolved considerably since the difficult learning experience of Haiti in 2010. New procedures have been implemented, new ways of working developed and learning generated and shared. Reforms to the wider humanitarian system, in which UNICEF has played a prominent role, are reflected in improvements in corporate and operational practice.

[28] A review has been conducted of the Humanitarian Performance Monitoring system (in draft at the time of writing).

70. In line with its fundamental ethos of ground-based action for children in emergencies, evaluations found the UNICEF humanitarian responses to be mostly relevant and aligned with humanitarian needs. Programming also aligns strongly, where feasible, with national responses, priorities and plans.

71. The evaluations found that UNICEF takes its responsibilities as humanitarian actor seriously, participating in joint responses to emergencies and prioritizing partnerships, although its connections with Government or national authorities are stronger than those with its partner United Nations agencies. UNICEF has also pragmatically embraced new relationships, such as with faith-based and religious groups, where these promise tangible humanitarian gains.

72. Overall, the evaluations documented here show some important results for children facing conflict and crisis. UNICEF has contributed to the reduced transmission of disease; helped to prevent hunger and undernutrition; and provided clean water and education to many vulnerable children. It has protected children in high-threat environments and built the capacity of local and national actors in humanitarian situations.

73. Yet some consistent weaknesses in UNICEF humanitarian action remain. Many of these were also reflected in the 2013 synthesis report. Specific areas identified by the evaluations as needing improvement are as follows:

(a) Needs assessments for affected populations, even under accessible conditions, are sometimes incomplete or too general. Consequently, opportunity-based, rather than needs-based programming, persists;

(b) Strategies and programme designs are sometimes weak, leading to a reactive rather than a proactive approach linked to such factors as limited preparedness, weak strategic frameworks (short term versus medium term) and/or weak needs assessments;

(c) AAP commitments have not been fully embraced or addressed, including the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability and broader commitments towards coordinated approaches for people-centred humanitarian action;

(d) The Level 2 and Level 3 SSOPs, while they have supported timely responses to sudden-onset crises, have failed to clarify synergies between the ongoing development efforts of country programmes and emergency response activities. This has left country teams uncertain of their role, at best, and, at worst, disenfranchised;

(e) Internal coherence remains limited, with an extremely sector-based approach impeding effectiveness and constraining results on the ground.

74. UNICEF has shown itself to be a conscientious adherent of international humanitarian principles. However, the evaluations also reflect the challenges and tensions faced by international actors working in complex governance environments while trying to ensure impartiality and independence. A more explicit position and rationale in specific operating contexts would benefit UNICEF here. Similarly, both the CCCs and the HPM indicators highlight the need for adaptable corporate-level frameworks that can encompass the specificities of context.

75. Evaluations found that UNICEF is still working to build clear links from humanitarian to development responses. The application of the Level 2 and Level 3 SSOPs has had a strong positive impact on the timeliness of responses. Their implications for existing country programmes and the progression to phase-out or robust transition planning, however, are still unclear.

76. Evaluations found evidence of a more risk-willing approach and an openness to innovation and experimentation. However, new procedures available to ease administrative burdens are not always applied by staff. A culture of confidence in their operational application remains to be built.

77. Finally, in its practical humanitarian action, UNICEF has not consistently adopted a proactive approach. Issues such as preparedness, transition planning and the implementation of AAP have not always kept pace with global shifts. While strategically UNICEF leads much of the humanitarian debate in its areas of expertise, playing leading roles in the cluster system and other global forums, evaluations reflect an organization evolving in response to, rather than ahead of, global change.

VII. Recommendations

78. On the basis of the evidence arising from these 30 evaluations of humanitarian action, this synthesis report makes seven recommendations for the future. These are aimed at helping UNICEF to improve its humanitarian action and more effectively and efficiently respond to the needs of the vulnerable children it serves.

1. More stringent requirements to evaluate

UNICEF has gathered a considerable body of evidence on its humanitarian action (76 evaluations since 2010). Its Evaluation Policy states that evaluations of humanitarian action will "usually be undertaken". Yet despite a set of corporate triggers, coverage remains unsystematic and patchy, particularly of Level 1 emergencies.

Action 1.1 UNICEF should consider setting more explicit triggers for its evaluation of humanitarian action. These should be explicitly defined by the Office of Emergency Programmes in discussion with the Evaluation Office. Dimensions could include: (a) spending (e.g., implementing the commitment in the present Evaluation Policy that an evaluation will usually be undertaken for a programme outcome area of over $10 million of expenditure); (b) duration of crisis (e.g., a two-year response); (c) strategic importance for the regional office; and (d) potential for wider lesson-learning for the organization.

2. The incorporation of needs into design

Evaluations found that UNICEF humanitarian action was often insufficiently grounded in needs assessment, even where such interventions were feasible. Programme designs require clearer links to needs.

Action 2.1 UNICEF programme designs for humanitarian responses should be required to clearly map the intended pathways from needs to intended results; justify the choices made in order to test assumptions; and avoid supply-driven responses, placing people and their evolving needs firmly at the centre. This should be a fundamental part of programme guidance;

Action 2.2 Performance monitoring strategies and plans for humanitarian action should clearly focus performance assessment on recording progress in responding to identified needs and to measuring adaptation as needs change;

Action 2.3 UNICEF should advocate, under the Grand Bargain process, for the humanitarian system to conduct lesson-learning on the experience of implementing needs assessments, including the challenges of the MIRA approach, and the need to invest in more detailed and granular needs assessments;

Action 2.4 Under the World Humanitarian Summit outcomes, AAP requires a more proactive, consistent and strategic approach. Meeting its commitments should be a fundamental requirement for all UNICEF humanitarian action, not a bonus.

3. Build a culture of confidence in procedures

Given its highly decentralized nature, guidance and procedures issued from the centre are only as influential as UNICEF country management and staff habits permit them to be. New protocols and procedures, such as the Level 2 and Level 3 SSOPs, need to be accompanied by capacity-development and training to build a risk-willing approach.

Action 3.1 UNICEF should conduct training and awareness-raising for staff and partners on the importance of applying Level 2 and Level 3 SSOPs during humanitarian emergencies, and particularly on commitments to speedy PCA processing. Concurrently, management should explicitly confirm the requirement for their implementation as part of the corporate procedures for humanitarian action. Where relevant, all evaluations should assess whether the SSOPs have been implemented as required;

Action 3.2 UNICEF should build awareness among its partners of its commitment to swift PCA processing under its Level 2 and Level 3 SSOPs. At the same time, it should clarify to partners the mechanisms by which they can hold UNICEF to account should these commitments not be met.

4. Intensify the approach to risk-informed programming within the localization agenda

The UNICEF decentralized structure means that it benefits from a vast cadre of national staff and partners, which provide it with a core capability to prepare for humanitarian action from a localized viewpoint. Under the Grand Bargain commitments, preparedness and risk identification should be approached from this perspective. Specific actions include:

Action 4.1 Planning: All relevant country programme documents should explicitly integrate an analysis of political, fragility, climate and other risks and assess the potential for reversion to emergency conditions. This implies accompanying the analysis with operational integration for the ability to flex, if conditions require, as part of risk-informed programming;

Action 4.2 Local capacity-building: UNICEF should build a cadre of first responders among partners at the country level, so that country programmes can flex from development to emergency action as conditions merit;

Action 4.3 Adaptive capacity: UNICEF should ensure that all PCAs include the scope for adaptation to emergency response, as part of preparedness.

5. Revisit the CCCs, which, in their current formulation, do not reflect the changing nature of humanitarian crises, and promote siloed rather than integrated responses.

Action 5.1 The CCCs could be revised to reflect the new challenges of humanitarian crises, such as migration and health emergencies, while promoting multisector responses, or they could be updated to include an addendum listing new challenges, setting integrated programming objectives and supplying an accompanying monitoring framework.

6. Accountability with flexibility

Performance monitoring of humanitarian action is a consistent challenge, yet the evaluations analysed here found considerable scope to improve the UNICEF monitoring of its own performance in emergencies, in line with recent internal efforts to strengthen HPM.[29]

Action 6.1 UNICEF should accelerate efforts to further integrate HPM with country-level monitoring systems to ensure that indicators express both global information needs and local realities;

[29] A full review of the Humanitarian Performance Monitoring approach in 2016, included in the synthesis of non-evaluative work, found similarly that HPM is often seen as being too rigid, separate from existing monitoring and evaluation systems at the country level and not always offering appropriate indicators. Its recommendations are presently being actioned by UNICEF.

Action 6.2 Under its HPM approach, UNICEF should prioritize extending the range of outcome indicators available to better reflect qualitative changes in conditions for affected populations as part of its accountability commitments.

7. Link programme integration to recovery

A more explicit and defined strategic overview within UNICEF humanitarian action is needed, firmly geared to resilience and transition goals. This should be linked to the revised CCCs.

Action 7.1 Collective planning is needed across programme areas, with multisector programming geared to the same intended goals of resilience and transition. Targets set should be high-level and overarching, rather than limited or sector-specific;

Action 7.2 Regional offices need to supply cross-sectoral, rather than programmatic, engagement with UNICEF country teams;

Action 7.3 UNICEF should better define its strategy for protracted emergencies, with a clear linkage to transition;

Action 7.4 The need for transition plans should be clearly defined and integrated within corporate guidance, recognizing different emergency types and the inevitable presence of protracted crises. All humanitarian responses should be designed and implemented with a clear view towards changing needs and evolving programme modalities, with transition integrated into the core of the UNICEF humanitarian programme cycle [30] and ethos.

[30] For details on the humanitarian programme cycle, see the Inter-Agency Standing Committee "Reference module for the implementation of the humanitarian programme cycle", available from https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/hpc_reference_module_2015_final_pdf.

Annex

Towards improved emergency responses: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016

Due to space limitations, the text of the independent report entitled "Towards improved emergency responses: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016" is not contained in the present annex. The report (83 pages) and a summary report (26 pages) are available from the UNICEF Evaluation Office website:

https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_100819.html.

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Management response to the UNICEF evaluation synthesis report

Towards improved emergency responses: synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016

Summary

UNICEF welcomes the synthesis of UNICEF evaluations of humanitarian action 2010–2016 as an opportunity to take stock of priority issues emerging from evaluations over the past five years, as a critical reference that fed into both the development of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021 and related efforts to strengthen the effectiveness and efficiency of UNICEF humanitarian action. The synthesis serves to further focus and provide an important overview perspective to change processes that have been already triggered by individual humanitarian evaluations and their management responses.

The synthesis highlights a number of issues that have been fully embraced in the new Strategic Plan: (a) strengthening connectedness and coherence between humanitarian action and development programming, with humanitarian response strategy more systematically anticipating recovery and connections to longer-term resilience, while development programming is more systematically risk-informed; (b) supporting a more systematic UNICEF and inter-agency collective approach to community engagement and accountability to affected people, putting people at the centre of humanitarian action; (c) contributing to stronger coordinated inter-agency needs assessment to guide humanitarian response planning that is relevant to evolving humanitarian needs; (d) strengthening results-based management, including planning and performance monitoring across humanitarian and development programming; and (e) maintaining and strengthening partnership with national and local humanitarian actors.

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UNICEF acknowledges that the Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action (CCCs) are not fully fit-for-purpose to guide UNICEF humanitarian action across the diversity of humanitarian situations, in particular for health emergencies, mass population movements and protracted crisis. UNICEF is committed to reviewing and updating the CCCs correspondingly. UNICEF is also committed to further reinforcing the implementation of its simplified procedures, especially in the context of Level 3 and Level 2 emergencies, to ensure faster, more effective delivery of at-scale humanitarian action.

Finally, UNICEF also recognizes the need to clarify and strengthen requirements for humanitarian evaluations to ensure more systematic and strategic evaluation coverage, including ensuring attention to different typologies of humanitarian response as well as producing evaluations that span both development and humanitarian programming; this will be addressed in the forthcoming revised evaluation policy of UNICEF.

The early findings of the synthesis significantly influenced the formulation of the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, such that a number of recommendations have already been addressed through measures newly embedded in corporate commitments and reporting. The synthesis also serves as an updated baseline analysis of priorities for strengthening UNICEF humanitarian action. The analysis of priorities will be refined and updated as new humanitarian evaluations are undertaken.

Key evaluation recommendations and UNICEF management response

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
Evaluation recommendation 1: More stringent requirements to evaluate UNICEF has gathered a considerable body of evidence on its humanitarian action (76 evaluations since 2010). Its Evaluation Policy states that evaluations of humanitarian action will "usually be undertaken". Yet despite a set of corporate triggers, coverage remains unsystematic and patchy – particularly of Level 1 emergencies. **Management response: Agree**					
Action 1.1 UNICEF should consider setting more explicit triggers for its evaluation of humanitarian action. These should be explicitly defined by the Office of Emergency Programmes (EMOPS) in discussion with the Evaluation Office. Potential dimensions could include: (a) spend (e.g., implementing the commitment in the present Evaluation Policy that an evaluation will usually be undertaken for a programme outcome results area of over $10 million); (b) duration of crisis (e.g., a two-year response); (c) strategic importance for the regional office; and (d) potential for wider lesson-learning for the organization.	**Agree** The Evaluation Office and EMOPS will define clearer triggers for humanitarian evaluation, taking into consideration the dimensions noted as well as the importance of evaluating humanitarian typologies that are less evaluated, and looking at the links between development and humanitarian programming. Reference to clearer triggers for humanitarian evaluation will be integrated in the forthcoming 2018 revised evaluation policy, which will be submitted to the UNICEF Executive Board for approval at its 2018 annual session.	Evaluation Office with EMOPS, Programme Division (PD)	2018 Q2	Under way	
Evaluation recommendation 2: Centralize needs in design Evaluations found that UNICEF's humanitarian action was often insufficiently grounded in needs assessments, even where these were feasible. Programme designs require clearer links to needs. **Management response** (See management response specific to each recommended action.) It is important to note that according to inter-agency guidance and as committed to by UNICEF and other partners, the needs assessment process should be coordinated and collaborative, impartial and fully transparent, led by the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and with the involvement of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and national partners. All efforts by UNICEF to strengthen the linkage between programme design and needs assessment, including rolling needs assessment and inputs feedback by affected people and communities, depend upon progress towards this collective vision of needs assessment.					
Action 2.1 UNICEF's programme designs for humanitarian responses should be required to clearly map the intended pathways from needs to intended results, justify the choices made to test assumptions, and avoid supply-driven responses, placing people (and their evolving	**Agree** The UNICEF programme response should frame intended results (outputs) that correspond to needs as identified in common needs assessments coordinated by the HCT. UNICEF sector plans should support and align to inter-cluster and cluster strategies and plans. UNICEF programme commitments, as	EMOPS with the Field Results Group (FRG) and PD	2018 Q1	Under way	

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section/s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
needs) firmly at the centre. This should be a fundamental part of programme guidance.	defined in the UNICEF Core Commitments for Children in Humanitarian Action, are adapted on the basis of identified needs and the capacities of partners. As a response evolves, needs should be reviewed periodically and programme design adjusted to evolving needs. All of the above is currently well-established in inter-agency and UNICEF programme guidance. (See the Inter-agency Standing Committee reference module for the implementation of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle[1] and the UNICEF Reference Document for Emergency Preparedness and Response). The refinement of needs assessment and more detailed planning must, however, be balanced with the need for quick response, as critical situations demand, and should not be undertaken at the expense of the immediate first wave of emergency response. **Action** To strengthen field practice further, UNICEF is expanding the corporate Results-Based Management (RBM) Learning Package by introducing more in-depth learning materials focusing on RBM in humanitarian action.				
Action 2.2 Performance monitoring strategies and plans for humanitarian action should clearly focus performance assessment on recording progress in responding to identified needs, and to measuring adaptation as needs change.	**Agree** It is essential to assess the performance of the overall humanitarian response in relation to both planned targets and evolving needs as the country office carries out a periodic review of progress. This periodic review of progress is important at the level of the specific agency, but even more so at the cluster and inter-cluster levels. However, in accordance with inter-agency guidance and practice, agency-specific performance tracking will continue to focus on targets that set out the expected UNICEF-specific contribution with implementing partners.	See 2.1	See 2.1	See 2.1	

[1] www.interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/hpc_reference_module_2015_final_.pdf

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section/s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
	Action As for 2.1, the above-mentioned refinements to guidance and learning materials will more clearly call for the periodic review of humanitarian response results in relation to both planned targets and identified and changing needs.				
Action 2.3 UNICEF should advocate, under the Grand Bargain process, for the humanitarian system to conduct lesson-learning on the experience of implementing needs assessments, including the challenges of the Multi-Cluster/Sector Initial Rapid Assessment (MIRA) approach, and the scope to invest in more detailed/granular needs assessments.	**Agree** **Action** On the basis of an exchange with other organizations, key activities have been identified under the Grand Bargain needs assessment work stream. Among these, UNICEF is advocating for the prioritization of the following three activities: (a) establishing a common inter-sectoral analysis framework (i.e., an analysis tree identifying key multi-sectoral data sets and aligning these to potential shared conclusions for needs analysis), including adaptations for sudden-onset and protracted emergencies, building upon existing guidance and tools with new adaptations (e.g., building upon the analytical framework in MIRA guidance, further developed by the Assessment Capacities Project and UNICEF-led clusters); (b) establishing structures (e.g., the Assessment Working Group under the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) and linked to national capacities/structures) and standard operating procedures at the national level to reinforce good practices in coordinated planning, implementation and the use of needs assessment by the HC/HCT, ICCG and clusters and the Cluster Lead Agencies; and (c) supporting links across humanitarian and development networks around data at the country level (e.g., between HCT Assessment Working Groups and the Common Country Assessment processes). UNICEF will advocate for the above-mentioned activities to be prioritized in the Grand	EMOPS	2017 Q4	Under way	

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section/s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
	Bargain needs assessment work stream plan, which is expected to be consolidated by the end of 2017.				
Action 2.4 Under World Humanitarian Summit outcomes, Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP) requires a more proactive, consistent and strategic approach. Meeting its commitments should be a fundamental requirement for all UNICEF's humanitarian action – not an added bonus.	**Agree** **Action** UNICEF country offices will be supported in applying a more systematic approach to putting people at the centre of humanitarian action, addressing community engagement, AAP and the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability[2]. Further, under its Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF has established organizational targets that set an important basis for effective AAP mechanisms: communication for development, programming for community engagement and behaviour change at scale and establishing real-time information innovations at scale. Planned actions also include:				
	2.4.1 Webinars for regional and country offices on core concepts; strengths and weaknesses of current experience; and available support mechanisms;	EMOPS with PD	2017 Q3-4	Under way	
	2.4.2 Development and roll-out of learning materials targeting planning and monitoring and evaluation staff;	as above	2018 Q1	Under way	
	2.4.3 As a support to the inter-agency Communication and Community Engagement Initiative, the development of standby partnerships and surge capacity to support country offices in implementing collective approaches to community engagement and accountability mechanisms;	as above	2018 Q2	Under way	
	2.4.4 The launch of an inter-agency knowledge resource platform (guidance, tools, good practice).	as above	2018 Q2	Under way	
Evaluation recommendation 3: Build a culture of confidence in procedures					

[2] Available from www.corehumanitarianstandard.org/the-standard

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
Given its highly decentralized nature, guidance and procedures issued "from the centre" are only ever as influential as UNICEF's country management and staff habits permit them to be. New protocols and procedures, such as the Level 2 and 3 Simplified Standard Operating Procedures (SSOPs), need to be accompanied by capacity development and training to build a "risk-willing" approach. **Management response: Agree** (See management response specific to each recommended action.)					
Action 3.1 **[3.1.1]** UNICEF should conduct training and awareness-raising of staff and partners on the importance of applying Level 2 and Level 3 SSOPs during humanitarian emergencies, and particularly commitments to speedy Programme Cooperation Agreement (PCA) processing.	**3.1.1 Agree** **Action** UNICEF will invest in a range of learning and dissemination strategies targeting staff as follows (see 3.2 regarding partners):				
	(a) Continued remote training through webinars for country office staff and consultants where Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies are declared;	EMOPS	2018 Q2	Under way	
	(b) Strengthening learning materials targeting senior leaders, regional networks and country offices on key pain points in SSOPs as identified in this synthesis, specifically on PCAs and human resources;	EMOPS	2018 Q2	Under way	
	(c) On the basis of the recent global review of civil society organization (CSO) partnerships, introduce initiatives to increase awareness on common practices and processes in all offices that are bottlenecks in the timely mobilization of partnerships.	ERG	2018 Q2	Under way	

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
[3.1.2] Concurrently, management should explicitly confirm the requirement for their implementation as part of corporate procedures for humanitarian action.	**3.1.2 Agree** The SSOPs are firmly established in policy and procedures, and each new trigger of a Level 2 or Level 3 emergency starts with a communication from the Executive Director. UNICEF will refine the language in this standard communication to more explicitly confirm the requirement of SSOP implementation. Further and more importantly, UNICEF will focus upon learning, as mentioned above, and will continue to track the implementation of key simplified procedures for country office business processes for Level 2 and Level 3 emergencies through the existing Emergency Management Team monitoring tools (action tracker).	EMOPS	2018 Q1 and as above 3.1.1	Ongoing; no further action	
[3.1.3] Where relevant, all evaluations should assess whether these SSOPs have been implemented as required.	**3.1.3 Partially agree** Given that past evaluations assessing the SSOPs, including the synthesis addressed in this management response, have had difficulty in absorbing the breadth of the SSOPs, and given that the verification of their implementation would require a very granular analysis against procedures, a systematic, detailed review against SSOPs should not be the focus of all humanitarian evaluations. Depending upon the purpose and objectives of a given evaluation, specifically as related to the standard evaluation categories of efficiency, timeliness and effectiveness, elements of the SSOPs will be assessed. However, the detailed verification of performance against established procedures is rather the focus of audits.		N/A	No further action proposed	
Action 3.2 UNICEF should build awareness among its partners of its commitments to swift PCA processing under its Level 2 and 3 SSOPs. At the same time, it should clarify to partners the mechanisms by which they can hold UNICEF to account should these commitments not be met.	**Agree** UNICEF is committed both to the clear dissemination of its partnership agreement procedures and to the establishment of mechanisms to allow partners to track and hold UNICEF accountable for the implementation of those procedures. The UNICEF CSO Procedure and an accompanying guidance for CSOs are now publicly available on unicef.org. Both documents communicate clear timelines for establishing	FRG	2018 Q4	Under way	

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
	partnerships and transferring funds. The CSO Procedure introduces a partnership review for partnerships of over $100,000 per year for two-way feedback on areas for improvement. An e-course on the CSO Procedure for UNICEF staff and CSO partners is under development and will be made available on Agora (UNICEF online learning platform). **Action** 3.2.1 The recent global review of CSO partnerships made several recommendations for improving CSO partnership management, including regarding: timelines for processing; the clear definition of targets; the monitoring of and reporting on progress; and partnership reviews. These findings will be used to drive global learning and discussions with CSO partners to identify strategies for improvement. 3.2.2 In line with the commitments made under the Grand Bargain, UNICEF is investing in technology to enable easier communication with partners as well as the more timely identification of partners and development of partnership agreements. In addition, the United Nations Partner Portal and eTools (both available by the end of 2018) will provide platforms for country offices to communicate with partners about expected processes and timelines and enable UNICEF and its partners to track progress.				

Evaluation Recommendation 4: Intensify the approach to risk-informed programming within the localization agenda
UNICEF's decentralized structure means that it benefits from a vast cadre of national staff and partners, which provide it with a core capability to prepare for humanitarian action from a localized viewpoint. Under Grand Bargain commitments, preparedness and risk identification should be approached from this perspective. Specific actions include (see table):

Management response: Partially agree (See management response specific to each recommended action.)
It is important to note that UNICEF invested over the course of its previous Strategic Plan (2014–2017) in strengthening a clear approach to risk-informed programming, including taking steps to integrate it within its results-based approach to programming. This supports country offices in identifying longer-term investments with partners to reduce and mitigate risks related to disasters, conflict, health emergencies, climate change and other shocks. Risk-informed programming includes disaster risk reduction, climate change adaptation and peacebuilding as well as strengthening national and local humanitarian response capacities. Similarly, UNICEF has invested heavily in strengthening emergency preparedness (shorter-term actions within a broader risk-informed programming): a new UNICEF Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response was issued in December 2016, establishing more stringent Minimum Preparedness Actions (effective March 2018); a new

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section's*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
electronic platform (due in place by the end of 2017) to support country offices in carrying out and documenting preparedness as well as providing organizational oversight on preparedness. Under the Grand Bargain commitments, UNICEF has also made commitments to strengthen implementing partnerships with local humanitarian actors. Under the Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, UNICEF change strategies, enabling work processes and corresponding management performance indicators have integrated each of these dimensions; i.e., (a) risk-informed programming; (b) emergency preparedness; and (c) strengthening partnerships with national and local humanitarian actors.					
Action 4.1 Planning: All relevant country programme documents (CPDs) should explicitly integrate an analysis of political, fragility, climate and other potential risks, and assess the potential for reversion to emergency conditions. This implies accompanying the analysis with operational integration for the ability to flex if conditions require, as part of risk-informed programming.	**Agree** This is addressed in existing policy, procedures and guidance. As outlined in the UNICEF Programme, Policy and Procedure (PPP) Manual, country offices are required to carry out a risk analysis as part of their situation analysis, the first step in developing a new country programme, and must monitor the identified priority risks to children and women, updating their risk profile at least semi-annually (see UNICEF Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response). The UNICEF PPP (revision forthcoming in 2018); the revised UNICEF Guidance on the Development of Programme Strategy Notes (2017); and the UNICEF Guidance on Risk Informed Programming (forthcoming 2018), all reinforce the importance of risk analysis. The Guidance on Risk Informed Programming, moreover, includes sectoral guidance to help staff to integrate adjustments to programming in terms of preparedness, mitigation and preventative actions. The set of Minimum Preparedness Actions established under the UNICEF Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response also addresses key operational preparedness actions, including (a) the clarification of coordination roles and responsibilities in relation to Government and partners; (b) the establishment of clear internal responsibilities and relevant training (c) preparedness for staff reassignments and deployments; (d) supply and logistics planning; (e) preparations for cash-based interventions, as appropriate; and (f) partnership agreements with CSOs, as appropriate.	FRG	N/A	No further action proposed	UNICEF Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response, 2016 (EMOPS/ PROCEDURE /2016/001). Preparedness for Emergency Response in UNICEF: Guidance Note 2016 Revised UNICEF Guidance on the Development of Programme Strategy Notes (2017)

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
Action 4.2 Local capacity building: UNICEF should build a cadre of "first responders" among partners at the country level, so that country programmes can flex from development to emergency action as conditions merit.	**Agree** UNICEF will invest in supporting systems strengthening, including but not limited to human capital (i.e., not limited to a focus on a "cadre" of first responders). This is well-captured in existing guidance on preparedness and partnerships (see 3.2.1).		N/A	No further action is proposed.	UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021
Action 4.3 Adaptive capacity: UNICEF should ensure that all PCAs include the scope for adaptation to emergency response, as part of preparedness.	**Disagree** UNICEF is committed to ensuring that partnership agreements include standing provisions for humanitarian response, as appropriate, but not in all partnerships. UNICEF enters into a wide range of partnerships with CSOs, which are established through PCAs. Not all partnerships bring added value to timely, efficient and effective humanitarian response. The UNICEF Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response does require country offices to identify potential humanitarian partners and formalize agreements with key partners, as guided by the required risk analysis and the corresponding preparedness plan.		N/A	No further action is proposed.	UNICEF Procedure on Preparedness for Emergency Response, 2016
Evaluation Recommendation 5: Revisit the CCCs The CCCs in their current formulation do not reflect the changing nature of humanitarian crises, and promote siloed rather than integrated responses. They should be revisited. **Management response: Agree**					
Action 5.1 The CCCs could either be revised to reflect the new challenges of humanitarian crises, such as migration and health emergencies, whilst promoting multi-sector responses; or updated to include an addendum, which lists new challenges, sets integrated programming objectives, and supplies an accompanying monitoring framework.	**Agree** UNICEF will initiate an exercise to update the CCCs during the next office management plan time frame.	EMOPS	2018 Q4	Planned	

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
Evaluation Recommendation 6: Accountability with flexibility Performance monitoring of humanitarian action is a consistent challenge, yet the evaluations analysed here found considerable scope to improve UNICEF's monitoring of its own performance in emergencies, in line with recent internal efforts to strengthen Humanitarian Performance Monitoring (HPM).[3] **Management response: Partially agree** (See management response specific to each recommended action.) In response to the review of the Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Approach carried out in 2016, UNICEF has already begun introducing a significant shift in its approach to performance monitoring and, more broadly, results-based management for humanitarian action. The main thrusts of the revision are to (a) reinforce the coherence and connectedness between the planning and monitoring of development and humanitarian programming; (b) strengthen field monitoring, focussing on the quality of programming and including feedback from affected people and communities; and (c) support adaptations for different types of humanitarian crises, including protracted crises, health emergencies and migration and refugee crises. This entails revising guidance, tools and information management systems and rolling them out to country offices through training, remote technical support and direct technical support from headquarters and regional offices, as needed. Some of this has already begun; further refinements will follow from the work under action 5.1 to update the CCCs.					
Action 6.1 UNICEF should accelerate efforts to further integrate HPM with country-level monitoring systems, to ensure that indicators express both global information needs and local realities.	**Agree** These general principles have already been established in revised guidance on performance monitoring in humanitarian action (Results-Based Management Handbook: Working together for children and the updated Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Toolkit landing page). **Action** UNICEF will continue to revise its monitoring guidance to reflect the coherence and connections between programme monitoring for humanitarian action and for development response. Deliverables will include the final revisions to the PPP Manual (monitoring chapter); an integrated programme monitoring toolkit; and refinement of the guidance on indicators, integrating previous stand-alone humanitarian guidance with mainstream UNICEF guidance and aligning the consolidated guidance with the inter-agency humanitarian indicator registry.	EMOPS with PD, FRG	2018 Q2	Under way	Results-Based Management Handbook: Working together for children (2017) Humanitarian Performance Monitoring Toolkit landing page

[3] A full review of the Humanitarian Performance Monitoring (HPM) approach in 2016, included in the synthesis of non-evaluative work, found similarly that HPM is often seen as being too rigid, often separate from existing monitoring and evaluation systems at the country level, and not always offering appropriate indicators. Its recommendations are presently being actioned by UNICEF.

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
Action 6.2 Under its HPM approach, UNICEF should prioritize extending the range of outcome indicators available, to better reflect qualitative changes in conditions for affected populations as part of its accountability commitments.	**Partially agree** UNICEF does not consider a focus on "extending the range of outcome indicators available" as the way to either strengthen outcome monitoring or to better reflect qualitative changes in conditions for affected populations. UNICEF recognizes that its approach to performance monitoring needs to be strengthened to "better reflect qualitative changes in conditions for affected populations." In addition, UNICEF is working to strengthen collective outcome-level monitoring with partners. UNICEF sees this as an endeavour requiring wider partnership and investment in real-time information systems development and innovative methodologies adapted to very challenging contexts for data collection. This is part of an evolving area of work under the UNICEF data strategy for children over the course of the new Strategic Plan.				
	Action 6.2.1 As part of the UNICEF approach to AAP (see 2.4.2: Development and roll-out of learning materials targeting planning and monitoring and evaluation staff and 2.4.4: Launch an inter-agency knowledge resource platform), the organization will provide training and contribute to an inter-agency toolkit addressing, among other issues, mechanisms for feedback and complaints from affected populations as part of performance management systems. The roll-out of these learning materials and training is linked with that of learning materials focusing on RBM in humanitarian action, as mentioned in 2.1.	EMOPS with PD	2018 Q2	Under way	
	6.2.2 Similarly, UNICEF will finalize revised guidance on approaches to field monitoring for application in both development and humanitarian programming. This will provide a systematic approach to probing both the results for affected people in humanitarian situations and the way in which the affected people perceive those results.	ERG with EMOPS	2018 Q1	Under way	

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section/s*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
	6.2.3 UNICEF is carrying out the country-level mapping of data gaps and capacities, which will in turn inform multi-stakeholder costed action plans to strengthen data for children. Piloting includes work in several countries with ongoing humanitarian situations or frequent seasonal disasters. By the end of 2018, this is expected to lead to partnerships around shared data priorities and learning about the ways in which to address outcome-level data gaps in such contexts.	DRP	2018 Q4	Under way	
Evaluation recommendation 7: Link programme integration to recovery A more explicit and defined strategic overview within UNICEF's humanitarian action is needed, which is firmly geared to resilience and transition goals. This should be linked to the revisited CCCs, above. **Management response: Partially agree** (See management response specific to each recommended action.) It is important to note that the synthesis also identifies some external constraints in linking humanitarian action to longer-term recovery and resilience, specifically instances in which funding for recovery efforts post-crisis was lacking. UNICEF views this recommendation as intricately linked with efforts to strengthen multi-year planning and funding.					
Action 7.1 Collective planning needs to take place across programme areas, with multi-sector programming geared to the same intended goals of resilience and transition. Targets set should be high-level and overarching, rather than limited or sector-specific.	**Partially agree** UNICEF agrees with the importance of strengthening strategy development and planning processes to address longer-term goals of resilience. UNICEF would argue that formulating objectives and targets that link to longer-term resilience is needed at the level of both sector-specific objectives and high-level overarching cross-sector goals. The recommended multi-sector programming and high-level multi-sector targets also require links to inter-agency goals and objectives and, ideally, coherence across HCT processes and plans as well as links to United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) processes and documents. **Action** UNICEF is addressing this through a number of ongoing processes and initiatives:				

Recommended action	*Action-specific management response*	*Responsible section's*	*Expected completion date*	*Actions taken and implementation stage*	*Supporting documents*
	7.1.1 Under the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2018–2021, the organization has included targets for establishing multi-year strategies and plans in protracted humanitarian crisis wherever multi-year humanitarian response plans (HRPs) have been established by HCTs . UNICEF will issue revised guidance to country offices to develop multi-year Humanitarian Action for Children appeals aligned with multi-year inter-agency HRPs; this guidance will draw upon lessons from recent evaluations and studies on multi-year humanitarian planning as well as consultations under the Grand Bargain multi-year planning and funding work stream.	EMOPS with PD	2017 Q4	Under way	
	7.1.2 As mentioned as part of its effort to strengthen RBM for humanitarian action (see actions 2.1, 2.4 and 6.2.1) and in line with those, UNICEF will include modules on humanitarian planning, with an emphasis on cross-sectoral strategies and the integration of shorter- and longer-term results. (This will be rolled out over the course of 2018 through a combination of globally led training activities, online self-directed learning options and regional- and country-level activities.)	EMOPS with PD	2018 Q1	Under way	
Action 7.2 Regional offices need to supply cross-sectoral, rather than programmatic, engagement with UNICEF country teams.	**Agree** It is a generally accepted good practice, where possible, for regional offices to coordinate cross-sector support missions to country offices. It is not possible in all circumstances, given the size of regions, the number of regional advisors and the competing time-bound support requirements of the country offices.		N/A	No further action is proposed.	
Action 7.3 UNICEF should better define its strategy for protracted emergencies, with a clear linkage to transition, below.	**Partially agree** While UNICEF needs to better define strategies for protracted humanitarian situations, there is not one strategy alone that is appropriate for all such situations; rather strategies must be context-specific. The [illegible] of the [illegible] greater clarity on commitments and strategies in protracted humanitarian situations. See recommendation 5.		N/A	See action 5.	

Recommended action	Management response	Responsible section(s)	Expected completion date	Actions taken and implementation stage	Supporting documents
Action 7.4 The need for integration of multi-hazard risk reduction and climate change adaptation guidance, recognition of [illegible] types, and the inevitable presence of protracted crises. All humanitarian responses should be designed and implemented with a clear view towards changing needs and evolving programme modalities, with transition becoming a central part of UNICEF's core humanitarian cycle and ethos.	**Partially agree** UNICEF agrees that all humanitarian responses should be designed and implemented with a clear view towards changing needs and evolving programme modalities, and with a view towards longer-term results. However, UNICEF does not see the development of another "plan" document as a viable solution; country offices are already engaged in the development of UNDAFs, HRPs and refugee response plans at the inter-agency level, and develop agency-specific CPDs, Programme Strategy Notes and workplans. Rather than creating new plans, UNICEF will strengthen and connect existing planning processes and tools that help country offices to see shorter-term and longer-term results as coherently connected, and to shift modalities as needed. The revised UNICEF guidance on the development of Programme Strategy Notes and the related quality assurance processes support country offices to articulate the connection between humanitarian response and longer-term outcomes. The forthcoming new Procedure on Country Office Work Planning explicitly establishes the requirement for country offices to manage and review workplans with a focus on humanitarian outcomes and outputs as well as on the coherence and connectedness between humanitarian and development results under common outcomes. The revised CCCs will address the connectedness and coherence between humanitarian and development programming. (See recommendation 5.) To strengthen its humanitarian response planning and its attention to strategy, including transition and resilience, UNICEF will pursue actions identified in the response to recommendation 7.1.		N/A	See actions 5.1 and 7.1. No further action is proposed.	